

# COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW

The future of media is here

## The IHT's glory days Time to spike the autism story Aaron Kushner's big bet on print

**Kids now get their news in bits and bytes  
from social media on their phones.  
With journalism retreating behind paywalls,  
how will they know what's true?**

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# COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW

May/June 2013

"To assess the performance of journalism... to help stimulate continuing improvement in the profession, and to speak out for what is right, fair, and decent."

—from the founding editorial, 1961



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— Jacqueline Mejia,  
EC Hispanic Media

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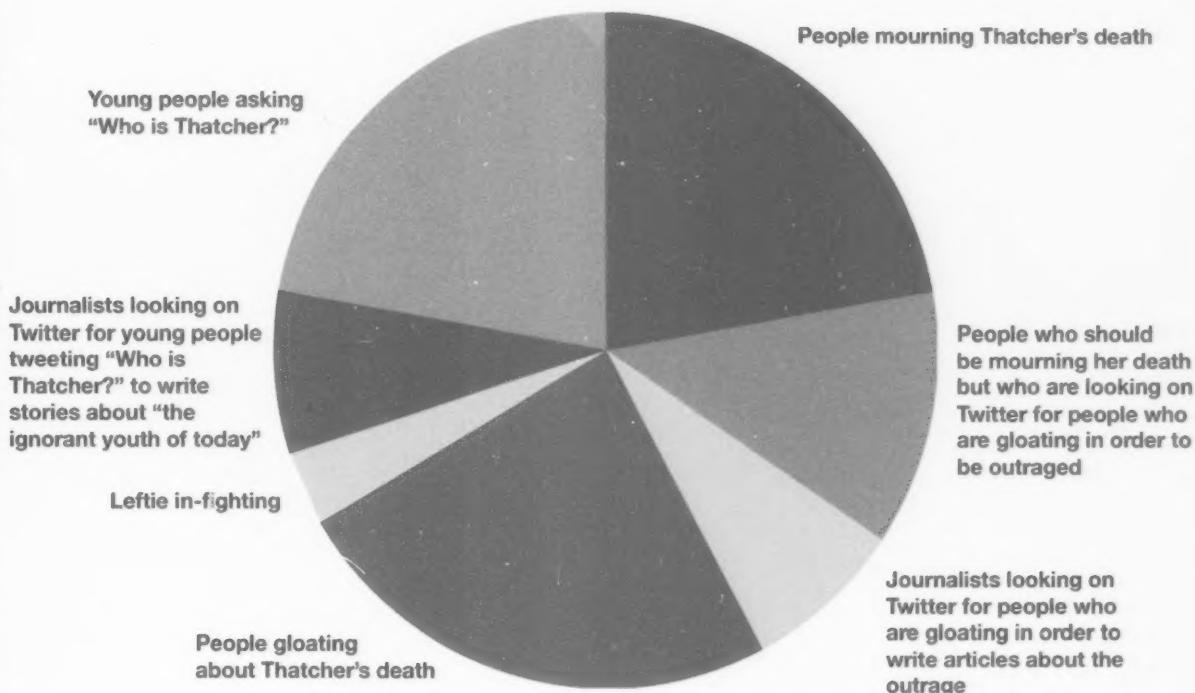
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# Opening Shot

## What Twitter will look like on the day that Thatcher dies

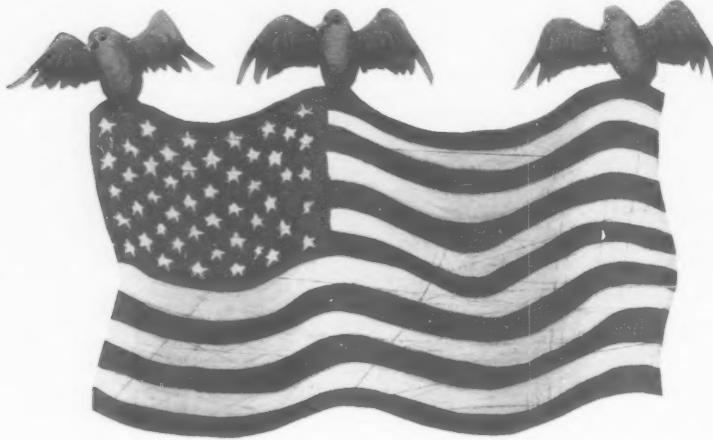


In December, as an impromptu inside joke, British designer and journalist Martin Belam took 10 minutes to craft a pie chart entitled "What Twitter will look like on the day that Thatcher dies." The former prime minister was reportedly ill at the time, and Belam and some journalist friends were discussing whether it was appropriate to satirize her. "She hadn't even died," Belam said, "and there was already a debate about how respectful you needed to be." The pie included slices like "Journalists looking on Twitter for people who are gloating in order to write articles about the outrage." It was retweeted about 200 times, and then shares dwindled to a handful per week.

Four months later, on April 8, Margaret Thatcher did die. The tweet has since been shared more than 3,100 times. Belam has gotten a range of reactions, from Thatcher loyalists opposed to joking about her death to folks who found it hilarious. "All the range of human emotions have been directed at me through the medium of this pie chart," he said. **CJR**

---

**I'm not you, babe** When Thatcher passed away, some tweeters who opposed her politics celebrated using the hashtag **#nowthatchersdead**. However, the unfortunate lack of capitalization led many to mistakenly think that pop star *Cher* had died—they read the hashtag as "Now that Cher's dead." The campaign originated at the site [IsThatcherDeadYet](#), whose final answer, YES, is approaching a quarter-million likes on Facebook.



## Empty calories

To feed young minds, let's add some nutrition to social media

If you've spent time with anyone under 25 recently, you will have noticed that they get their news from their friends on their phones—much of it from social-media feeds. At the same time, more and more journalism shops that underwrite enterprise reporting are starting to lock their wares behind paywalls. Someday in the not-too-distant future, it seems, there will be very little credible news for the bloggers and scrapers to aggregate. So where does that leave

the young adults of tomorrow? How can they quickly tell what's true? How can they get beyond the superficial updates about Justin Bieber's monkey or Kim Kardashian's pregnancy? Believe it or not, some current high-school journalism students are worried about these questions, too (see page 27). If they stick to what their social networks tell them, they can easily end up in what Eli Pariser has called a "filter bubble," keeping out varying points of view and also preventing serendipitous discoveries—things they didn't know they wanted to know. General-interest media, at least, take them beyond the bubble (they might come for Kim but then discover Syria).

Given the fragmentation of the content marketplace, there's a financial wrinkle in the social-news trend, too. Even if media subscribers do pay up, chances are that that audience will be too old to satisfy advertisers' perennial hunger for the ever-tasty 18-to-34-year-old demographic. Nowadays, a business that wants to introduce its product or service to a mass audience of young consumers has no choice but to dance with the likes of Google, Facebook,

media that shape what we see and what we pay attention to are barely formed, and they change week to week, not year to year. If we are excited by the possibility of creating media that expose us to a wide range of perspectives, we have the opportunity to build the tools we need."

Perhaps journalism can learn from the mistakes of the food industry, which bred a perfectly red, flawless-looking tomato, giving the edge to looks over taste, since that's what consumers were buying. But bland, homogenized content and empty social-media streams will not feed the brains of the nation. We need to propagate the media version of the tasty, nutritious tomato. As Zuckerman concludes, "If we want a world that values diversity of perspective over the certainty of singular belief, a world where many voices balance a privileged few, where many points of view complicate issues and push us toward novel solutions, we need to build that world." And yes, we'll take those odd-shaped, multicolored heirloom tomatoes over the tasteless, fibrous, perfect ones any day. **CJR**

Apple's iTunes store, or Amazon. And thanks to all of the data about users those companies have vacuumed up over the years, the digital behemoths may indeed be able to segment audiences and target customers for advertisers with minimal "waste."

Of course, advertisers can also create their own content—which is sometimes labeled as "sponsored" or "integrated" although the current *nom de buzz* is "native advertising." Sometimes, when a pitch is really clever, it does win over those desirable young'uns; it might even go viral. But surreptitious marketing may just further confuse young readers.

And needless to say, the advertising dollars that once would have underwritten original journalism never make it to editorial coffers. But hey, it's all part of the industry's upheaval, and as long as such content is labeled and does not attempt to deceive consumers, there's no use fighting it.

We'd argue that it's in everyone's interest to pay close attention to the evolving content ecosystem and compare notes—with kids, teachers, marketers, elected officials, and content creators—about what's best for all.

In his new book, *Rewire: Digital Cosmopolitans in the Age of Connection* (W.W. Norton, June), Ethan Zuckerman frames the issue constructively: "Those who would like to rewire news to be more representative, more global, and more surprising have an opportunity," he writes. "The tools of social

The Wall Street Journal  
*congratulates*  
**Bret Stephens** on his  
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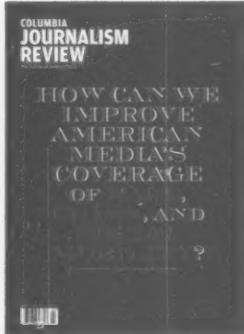
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FEATURED IN OUR GLOBAL  
VIEW COLUMN HELP MAINTAIN  
A STANDARD OF JOURNALISTIC  
EXCELLENCE IN AN AGE WHEN  
NEWS IS EVERYWHERE, BUT  
INSIGHT IS SCARCE.

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**Common ground**

Can't say enough good things about your intelligent, insightful roundtable discussion on race and class ("Fair Share," a conversation hosted by Farai Chideya, CJR, March/April). I hope it will spark many more discussions in newsrooms (and exec suites) across the country. Kudos to CJR for making it the cover story and then giving it so much room to roam.

*Byron Reimus  
Yardley, PA*

**Correction**

In our March/April cover story "Fair share," we quoted the *Lexington Herald-Leader*: "It has come to the editor's attention that the *Herald-Leader* neglected to cover the civil rights movement. We regret the omission." While we took the comment at face value, the editor in question, John Carroll, actually intended it as a rueful preface to a serious examination of his paper's lapses in civil rights coverage. We apologize for the missing context.

**Fan friction**

Re: "Aspiring Line" by Eric Alterman (CJR, March/April). William F. Buckley always seemed creepy to me.... But then I'm one of those lefty liberals, so what do I know? Seriously, this was fun—an honest recollection, so well written, and I could understand every word. (Can't say the same about Buckley, which, I suspect, is how he liked it.)

*Ramona Grigg  
Drummond Island, MI*

Very revealing. I always knew I was doing the wrong things to get into that "personal and professional ecosystem," but never have I seen, spelled out so explicitly, exactly what the right things were. Thanks for making me feel much better about my scant interactions with Hitch and total absence at Tina Brown's parties.

*Edward Ericson Jr.*

*Joppa, MD*

**Thanks for making me feel better about my total absence at Tina Brown's parties.**

How many times will Eric Alterman stick his face into the same fan? Now we know!

*Mike Gebert  
Chicago, IL*

**Safe at home?**

Thanks, Clay Shirky, for your article ("Dark Shadows," CJR, March/April). Homicide Watch could provide further service to the community by integrating a public-health approach to the data, and dividing it into different types of violence: child, youth, family, stranger, police... In most communities, the No. 1 type of assault is domestic violence, which requires a different

approach to reducing the incidence and helping the victims than, say, gang violence. Identifying the weapon can be useful, too. Highlighting organizations and people in the community who are working to reduce and prevent violence would also help... instead of living with the idea that there's nothing to be done about it, or that it's only a police and criminal-justice problem.

*Jane Ellen Stevens  
Founder/editor, ACEsTooHigh.com  
Winters, CA*

**No holds barred**

James Ridgeway's "Fortresses of Solitude" (CJR, March/April) is a fantastic and necessary piece of journalism—and a call to action, though that's language that will make a lot of journalists

**EDITOR IN CHIEF'S NOTE**

'THE JOURNALISM COMMUNITY DESERVES DIVERSITY, BUT WHY AREN'T WE getting it?' asked Farai Chideya, moderator of CJR's April 3 panel about race, class, and social mobility at the Newseum in Washington, DC (for coverage, see page 60). Many thanks to the ACLU for supporting the event, and to Farai and her fellow panelists Raquel Cepeda, Gene Policinski, Richard Prince, and Jeff Yang for their insights and good humor. As Yang joked mordantly, "Journalism-Americans are soon far more likely to be extinct than any of the other minorities we've talked about." If you missed the livestream, you can still catch the conversation, thanks to C-SPAN ([www.c-spanvideo.org/program/311883-1](http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/311883-1)).

The next item of gratitude is bittersweet: CJR's vice chairman, Peter Osnos, has announced that he's stepping down, having helped us recruit his successor, David Kellogg. Peter has been a staunch champion of CJR, eager to brainstorm any problem, ever willing to make introductions, and always first with congratulations on any minor victory. We so appreciate your support, Peter!

—*Cyndi Stivers*



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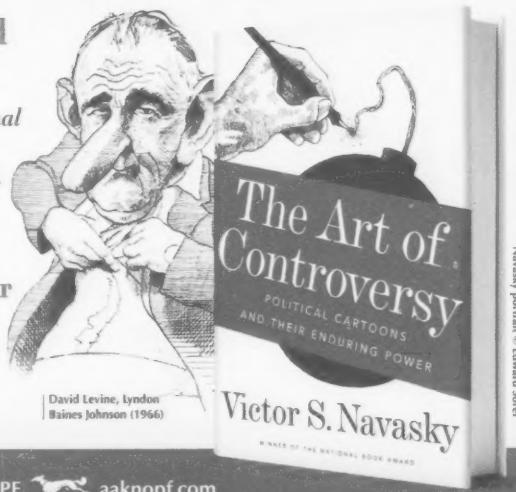
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—*Tom Brokaw*



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uncomfortable. I also read a great post at Solitary Watch summarizing the specific media-access regulations at various prisons, and there's inconsistency across the country—which puts reporters at a disadvantage. It's clear that some mass action is needed to push a large-scale precedent on this issue, like the ACLU's mass FOIA campaign that made public thousands and thousands of pages about American torture abroad.

*Jina Moore (CJR contributor)*

*Comment posted on CJR.org.*

### **Tight focus**

Carl Corey's documentary images of America (featured in "On the Job" in the March/April CJR) are worthy of the John Chancellor Journalism award. Each series is a complete visual essay, a perfect example of masterful journalism.

*Vincent Virga*

*Washington, DC*

### **Good to NOLA?**

I am so pleased to have read Ryan Chittum's article ("The battle of New Orleans," CJR, March/April). The City of New Orleans has been missing the in-depth journalism that was the hallmark of the former *Times-Picayune*. We currently have an issue with city infrastructure and the revising of the Sewerage and Water Board. It would have been on the front page of the old *T-P*. Instead, the citizens of New Orleans get treated like we have no brains and only want to read about sports and entertainment. I found it interesting that Advance produced a print edition of the *Times-Picayune* on Thanksgiving Thursday as a platform for the Black Friday sales ads. It's as if New Orleans has returned to the months just after Katrina: receiving our news inconsistently or on an ad-hoc basis. I subscribe to the *T-P*, the *Advocate*, *The New York Times* (all in print), and the *Wall Street Journal* (digital) as well as *New Orleans City Business*. And if I feel left out of the news cycle, imagine how someone who does not have Internet access feels.

*Ann de Montluzin Farmer*

*New Orleans, LA*

It's a shame that Ryan Chittum refused our invitation earlier this year to visit our newsroom before writing a piece

filled with bad assumptions, inaccuracies, and preconceived notions. If he had, he would have seen firsthand an extraordinarily talented team of journalists working to produce an excellent newspaper and digital report. He would have heard the unmistakable hum of a news operation in top form—reporting, editing, collaborating on a range of work, from brief dispatches to ambitious enterprise pieces. He might have caught the excitement that comes from engaging with your readers and allowing your work to be shaped by their reactions and suggestions. He would have been hard-pressed to ignore the storytelling energy in the room and our use of the many tools to express it.

As reporters, we choose our subjects, our quotations, the lenses to frame our work. The best put aside conventional wisdoms and derivative points of view. They allow their writing to be shaped by deep reporting and their own fresh responses to what they find. Chittum's backward-looking and narrow take falls short of doing that. American

newspaper journalism has been beset by bloodletting and decline for a decade. Those who find a path forward will do so by being innovative and entrepreneurial.... We don't claim to have all the answers...but we believe that we're advancing the essential conversation about what kinds of bold changes will save us. We invite others interested in the fate of our business to come and see us in New Orleans and to explore but one of many possible futures for viable, vigorous journalism in the digital age.

*Jim Amoss*

*Editor, Times-Picayune*

*New Orleans, LA*

*Comment posted on CJR.org*

*Ryan Chittum responds:* As Jim Amoss well knows, I was in New Orleans in early December and asked for interviews then and in the weeks afterward. I didn't hear back from anyone for about seven weeks, at which point my deadline was nigh. My editors declined to fly me down to New Orleans again just to see the new newsroom. **CJR**

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### **NOTES FROM OUR ONLINE READERS**

IN LATE MARCH, CJR SCIENCE WRITER CURTIS BRAINARD WROTE A PIECE about the Finkbeiner Test, a checklist of topics that those writing about female scientists should avoid to keep the focus on professional achievements, not gender. The test was named after science writer Ann Finkbeiner, who chose to ignore the issue of gender in a recent profile of a female astronomer.

Brainard wrote: "Finkbeiner's profile of UCLA astronomer Andrea Ghez [is] a beautifully written piece about Ghez's fascination with telescopes and her pioneering work with speckle imaging, which led to proof that a supermassive black hole lies at the center of the Milky Way—and it has nothing to do with her gender." And commenters responded:

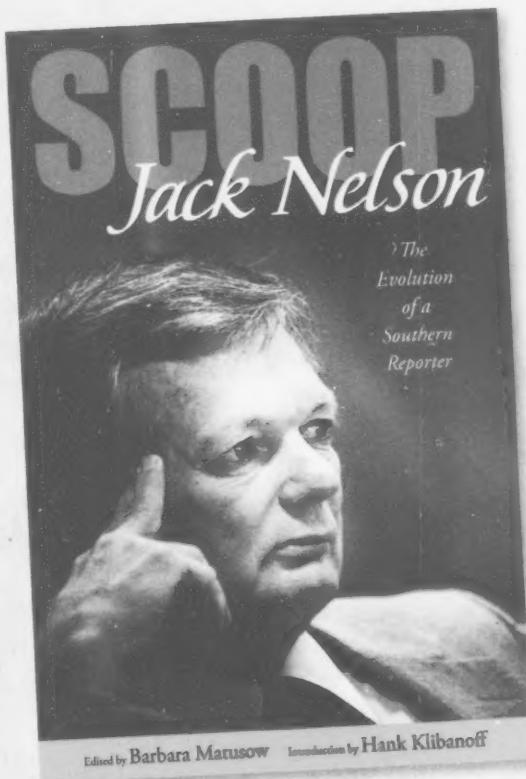
While the "no firsts" rule is very appropriate, what I really want to see more of is "seconds." "She's the second woman to win" tells me that the award committee isn't just looking to check off the "female recipient" box. —*Joe Noakes*

The rule of "no firsts" is a difficult one for me. I think it can be quite valuable to recognize the significance of a first when it demonstrates how much harder a victory it may have been to achieve. Everyone that follows in those footsteps has it a little easier by virtue of the fact that the barrier was previously broken by that pioneer." —*Marykate Clark*

It's fine to say that science articles should focus on science, but I really take issue with how dismissive Finkbeiner is about women scientists' comments on gender discrimination and imbalance in their fields.... Dealing with gendered assumptions about my competence and career is a fundamental part of my experience; if women scientists go out of their way to tell you that this an important issue to them, maybe you should respect what they are trying to communicate instead of believing that the problems we deal with will disappear if ignored. —*Gwen Spencer*



## The story of a poor boy from Alabama who won the Pulitzer Prize and became one of the most important journalists of the 20th century



A terrific memoir by one of America's toughest and greatest reporters."

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—PHIL GAILEY, TAMPA BAY TIMES



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# Currents



## Open Bar **The Gandamack**

*Gandamack Lodge  
Kabul, Afghanistan*

*Although the bar's official name is the Hare and Hound Watering Hole, most people know it as The Gandamack.*

**Year opened** 2001. The founder of the lodge, Peter Jouvenal, was a cameraman working with the BBC's John Simpson when the Taliban were ousted from Kabul. Hordes of journalists flocked to Afghanistan to cover the fall of the oppressive regime, but few had a place to stay. Jouvenal found a house and began renting rooms. The lodge moved to its current location in 2005.

**Who drinks there** As the only real bar in Kabul, the cavernous

basement pub of the Gandamack Lodge is a favorite hangout for journalists, NGO workers, NATO representatives, and private security contractors in tight T-shirts that show off tattooed muscles. Diners from the restaurant trickle downstairs around 10pm.

**Who doesn't drink there** Afghans or anyone the security guards think might be Muslim. Afghan law prohibits alcohol, and the owner once spent 10 days in prison after police raided the place. An

"arrangement" has since been made, according to the staff.

**Signature drink** Heineken in a can (\$10), paid for with coupons which customers buy in \$20, \$50, and \$100 packs at the entrance.

**Distinguishing features** A bookcase full of works by war correspondents from all over the world stands by the entrance; a framed photo of the current British hack pack hangs on the wall next to a tribute to former

## Language Corner

### Plum loco

The witness, according to the news story, said the robbers were “plum crazy.” Not unless they were robbing a green grocer. (It was a McDonald’s.)

A “plum” is a fruit, usually of a deep purple color, also called “plum.” When dried, “plums” used to be known as “prunes” until prunes got a marketing department and became known as “dried plums.”

“Plum” as an adjective means “desirable,” as in “a *plum job*.” *The Dictionary of American Slang* says that usage arose around 1825, and may be related to Little Jack Horner and how good and lucky he was to pull “plums” out of pies. By then, the British were already considering something good to be “plummy.”

Journalists occasionally

write that someone got a “plumb job.” That could be one of two things: A job that requires the employee to stand perfectly straight or a job where the employee measures things along perfectly straight lines—for “plumb” is something perfectly vertical or in line. Builders want to be sure their lines are straight or “plumb.”

Because “plumb” means truly, completely, entirely straight, the slang dictionary says, about 1748 someone was called “plumb silly.” From there came “plumb crazy” (or its twin, “plumb loco”), “plumb tired,” and other such straightforward expressions.

And yes, some “plumbers” have both “plumb jobs” and “plum jobs.” Lucky them.

—Merrill Perlman

## The Buzz

### They’re back!

After 17 years underground, a brood of cicadas is emerging from the soil this spring, from



the Carolinas to Connecticut, to hastily molt, mate, and die.

WNYC, New York City’s public-radio station, is monitoring—and predicting—the action with its “Cicada Tracker” crowdsourcing project.

John Keefe, senior editor of WNYC’s Data News Team, got the idea after learning that the insects only come topside when the soil reaches 64 degrees, meaning the swarm would unfold gradually, from south to north.

Keefe and some colleagues built a prototype sensor to measure soil temperature. Then WNYC hosted build-your-own-sensor parties and posted DIY instructions online, along with a “Bug Blog,” a map that displays the changing soil temperatures, and an interactive decoder where participants report their sensor readings.

Keefe says this is mostly for fun, but that they have been talking to some entomologists and may be able to help the scientists gather data on things like the stages, locations, and numbers of the cicada swarm. “The other cool part of this,” he says, “is that it could serve as a model for gathering other datasets—like measuring noise or pollution, stories of actual significance.”

## Sree Tips

### Social-media etiquette for journalists

# Q:

There seem to be new social media platforms released every week. How do you decide which ones, if any, are worth using?

# A:

There are already too many social media platforms, and we’re just getting started. There’s no need to be among the first to join any of them. My policy is not to join any of these right away, but to see if they gain enough traction to be worth my time. I didn’t join Twitter till two years after all the cool kids did; I waited till I was able to fit it into my workflow and my lifeflow. Another way of thinking about it: Be an early tester, late adopter of new technology. Until you find it has a concrete role to play in your journalism, it’s safe to stay away.

*Sree Sreenivasan (@Sree), Columbia University’s first Chief Digital Officer, answers your social-media-etiquette questions. Send your queries via email [sree@sree.net](mailto:sree@sree.net) (subject line: CJR etiquette).*

customers who’ve been killed in Afghanistan.

**Tough ticket** Getting into the compound housing the lodge means passing through armed guards and three metal gates.

**On the record** The original lodge is said to have been the former home of Osama bin Laden’s fourth wife.

—Sabra Ayres

*Got a bar you love? Send recommendations for this feature to [openbar@cjr.org](mailto:openbar@cjr.org).*



## The Conversation Sports section 2.0

After two years as deputy editor, **Jason Stallman** took over in January as The New York Times sports editor when his boss, Joe Sexton, left for ProPublica. Together, Sexton and Stallman had re-imagined what a daily sports section could be. They published powerful longform narratives and investigations, including the heartbreaking story of hockey enforcer Derek Boogaard and Alan Schwarz's groundbreaking work on concussions (which actually began before the Sexton/Stallman era). They experimented with online storytelling techniques, most dramatically in the multimedia presentation of "Snow Fall," about a fatal avalanche in Washington State (which won the 2013 Pulitzer for feature writing). They broke Times design conventions, publishing, for instance, a mostly blank front page when baseball's Hall of Fame made history by rejecting all nominees this year. CJR asked Stallman in March about his work with Sexton, as well as his plans for the section.

**How did this ambitious new approach to the section come about?** In reality, it was probably an 11-minute conversation in the *Times* cafeteria. From the start, Joe and I agreed on some very simple concepts: Beat writing is the lifeblood of our report; we should try to be imaginative and experimental, because we can probably get away with doing some dumb stuff while our bosses aren't looking; and we should do whatever it takes to get the smartest people in the newsroom to do cool stuff for Sports.

We wanted to give our readers something noticeably different. That could be in the form of story topic, design, photography, graphics, whatever. Just something that didn't feel like everything else out there.

**A lot of the pieces were beyond the baseball-football-basketball trinity that dominates US sports coverage. Was that by design?** Eh, I'm not so sure about that. I feel like we've done great work on head trauma (football) and the Mets' financial problems

(baseball) and the Nets' arrival in Brooklyn (basketball), among other trinity-based issues. But, sure, we've taken an expansive view of "sports." A good story is a good story, whether it's about a baseball team or a cyclist or a badminton player.

**Of all the pieces you guys have published that fall into this longform/investigative category, which is your favorite and why?** Tough question. I'll live in eternal awe of Alan Schwarz for completely owning the single most important

sports story of our generation. Looking back, what he did over six years was downright amazing.

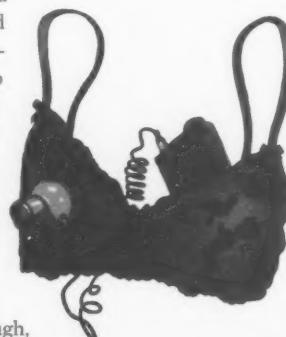
But John Branch, Barry Bearak, Jeré Longman, Juliet Macur, and others on our staff are regularly producing some truly fine longform journalism. So I don't think I could label any one piece as my favorite.

**Good answer. What changes, in any area of the section, do you plan on making?** We're going to become much more of an international presence.

ASAFAHANUKA

## Strange But True More tales from the beat

**Lea Thompson, *Dateline NBC*** We once conducted an entire interview in Dallas using a "bra cam." We were exposing a fortune teller and her lucrative racket. Sandra Thomas, the producer, was shooting with a hidden camera embedded in a tiny crystal necklace attached to her bra. We'd already paid the fortune teller \$1,200 to supposedly help save Thomas's marriage, but now she was asking for an additional \$11,700 to build wax effigies in the desert to rid Thomas of her "guilt" and save her husband from certain death. The fortune teller fled with our \$1,200 when we revealed who we were, but her father agreed to give us an interview. He insisted, though, that there be no NBC camera crew; Sandra would have to shoot the interview with our hidden camera. He made us sit on this very low couch, affording him a better view. Not



missing a beat, Sandra crouched over, put her hands on her knees, and used her legs like a tripod. Our crew couldn't resist videoing this bizarre scene through the window; we could hear them laughing so hard they were crying. But we got the interview.

**Jeff Kramer, freelance writer, Syracuse, NY** *The Boston Globe* sent me in April 1992 to get reaction to the acquittal of the cops

accused of beating Rodney King. I was trying to report the story in South Central Los Angeles, when my car was surrounded by maybe a half-dozen thugs. They tried—but failed—to pull me out of the car, and then one of them shot me twice in the lower left leg. I tried to drive away but couldn't gain much speed because they'd shot out my tires. As I was leaving the scene, I was shot in the upper back. I managed to keep driving and found a side street where kids were playing on a lawn. People in that house and their neighbors offered to drive me to get medical help, though by then the entire area had exploded into an all-out riot. They dropped me off at a Unocal gas station that was being used for medical triage purposes. I was in the hospital for three days. I had no lasting effects from my injuries, though the .38-caliber slug that hit me from behind remains embedded in my upper torso.

—Marla Jo Fisher



## What's in My... Rolling Briefcase

# Micheline Maynard

*Micheline Maynard is something of a renaissance woman. The former New York Times Detroit bureau chief covers the auto industry, transportation, the reinvention of the US economy, travel, food, sports...you name it. She writes the Voyages blog at Forbes.com, contributes to Atlantic Cities, and indulges her foodie alter ego at her blog, Culinary Woman. She recently led the public-radio project Changing Gears, which examined the rebirth of Rust Belt cities around the Midwest. Maynard currently is the Reynolds Visiting Professor of Business Journalism at Central Michigan University. She unpacked her "little office on wheels" for **Melissa Richards**, one of her students.*



- 1 Burberry raincoat
- 2 Insulated mug. "It's my little reminder of home."
- 3 Empty water bottle. She fills it after passing through security. "Airport water prices are ridiculous," and "it's important to stay hydrated while traveling."
- 4 Grape-Nuts. For when she arrives at her destination late and hungry.
- 5 Granola bars. "It's good to have a healthy snack if you are somewhere for hours."

- 6 Bamboo portable cutlery set. Great for travel. It includes a fork, spoon, knife, and chopsticks. (She loves Asian food.)
- 7 iPad. She uses a flight-awareness app to track her route.
- 8 iPhone. For the camera and recording app as much as for the phone.
- 9 Flashlight. "For when the power goes out, or if you drop something behind a table."
- 10 Broadcast-quality

- headphones
- 11 Powertrip. This portable battery charger works with all devices and has enough power to charge four phones.
- 12 MacBook
- 13 Pens and Sharpie. The blue pen is her favorite book-signing pen; she got it from a shop that matches you with your perfect pen.
- 14 Moleskine notebooks. A large one for speech notes, and a smaller one for business cards.

- 15 Business cards. Her personal card, and one for her food blog, which is "about finding quality food on the road."
- 16 Blue folder. For hotel and car-rental confirmations.
- 17 Plastic clips. To keep hotel curtains shut, and hang wet socks or other garments.
- 18 Print! Doctors are advising people to not look at lighted devices before bed. And "it's nice to have something that won't die on you."

## Darts & Laurels

# The Phoenix's ashes, Weil's catch, the WSJ's 'experts,' etc.



**Laurel** to *In These Times*, for exposing how, in the face of tough economic times, state legislatures are slashing budgets for agencies that enforce minimum-wage laws. The result is that some of the most vulnerable people in society—like the Virginia house painter who was facing eviction after a contractor shorted him \$1,000—are getting screwed out of their already meager earnings.

**Laurel** to *The Boston Phoenix*, which succumbed in March to the economic forces roiling the industry, for nearly a half-century of independent journalism and many launched careers (Charles Pierce, Susan Orlean, David Denby, etc.).

**Laurel** to Bloomberg's Jonathan Weil, for his great catch on the wrist slap administered by the Justice Department to Ernst &

Young for helping 200 clients use illegal tax shelters to cheat the government out of billions of dollars. At the bottom of the document spelling out E&Y's chicanery, Weil notes, was this love letter from the US Attorney's Office: "The wrongdoing in this case by a small group of professionals at E&Y represented a deviation from the more than 100-year history of ethical and professional conduct by E&Y and its partners." After getting no comments from the US Attorney's office and Ernst, Weil details 19 serious settlements, charges, and sanctions against the accounting firm over the last two decades.

**Laurel** to scholars Riley E. Dunlap, of Oklahoma State University, and Peter J. Jacques, of University of Central Florida, for their study that links a rash of new books denying the reality of manmade climate change to conservative think tanks, including the Heartland, Cato, Marshall, and Competitive Enterprise Institutes. (There have been 108 such books between 1982 and 2010, with half appearing since 2005.)

**Laurel** to the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists for its landmark series on offshore tax havens that has law enforcement scrambling and scofflaws sweating from Mongolia

ASAF HANUKA

## Future Shock Predictions from the past

*In 1923, The World, Joseph Pulitzer's raucous daily, published a series of predictions from experts in various fields about what the world would be like in a hundred years. Under the headline, "How Will The Troubled Old World Take Step A Century Hence?", editor Herbert Bayard Swope offered this sanguine summary of the prognostications: "There's a good time coming... The problems that beset us, the strife and normalcy, will all be banished and forgotten, and the world will be a much better place for our great-great grandchildren to live in." If only. Burt Dragin, who teaches journalism at Laney College in Oakland, CA, culled the following excerpts from The World and the Twenties: The Golden Years of New York's Legendary Newspaper by James Boylan, CJR's founding editor:*

**Motion pictures** (D.W. Griffith, movie producer) I do not foresee the possibility of instantaneous transmission of living action to the screen within 100 years. There must be a medium upon which the dramatic coherence can be worked out, and the perfected result set firmly, before the screen will be permitted to occupy the public's attention. In the instantaneous transmission, there would be entirely too much waste of the public's time, and that is the important thing—time.

**Alcohol** (William H. Anderson, state superintendent, Anti-Saloon League of New York) The beverage use of [alcohol] will be utterly unknown except among the abnormal, subnormal, vicious, and depraved, which classes will have been bred out of the race in America.



**Visionaries** The World's city room in the early 20th century.

**Democracy** (Cordell Hull, chairman, Democratic National Committee) With the development of intelligence, class differences and distinctions should disappear, therefore the representative legislative bodies of the people, if there are more than one, would be truly representative bodies of all the people.

**Birth control** (Margaret Sanger, leading birth-control advocate) Birth control will have become a part of education in health and hygiene....The results, in much shorter time than four or five generations, will be happier homes, greater mutual respect between husband and wife, honeymoons lasting two to three years before children arrive, with husband and wife thoroughly equilibrated to each other, because there has been time for mutual understanding and development before parenthood is entered upon....Four or five generations will develop new men and women with finer susceptibilities, nobler sentiments toward each other, and a worthier sense of responsibility toward the race.

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to Germany, Greece to the US. The investigation illustrates how shadowy firms that specialize in setting up shell companies to anonymously hold foreigners' assets make it possible for fully one third of the world's wealth to reside in offshore jurisdictions—some of it legitimately so, much of it not. The project involved 86 journalists from 37 news organizations—including *The Washington Post*, *Le Monde*, the Canadian Broadcasting Corp., and *The Guardian*—and relied on 2.5 million records relating to 120,000 companies. The philanthropically funded consortium was launched in 1997 as a project by the Center for Public Integrity. The idea was to foster collaboration among news outlets to extend the center's watchdog journalism to cross-border issues.

**Dart** to *The Wall Street Journal*, for leading off its March 21 "The Experts" column—Should People Buy Long-Term Insurance? was the question of the day—with answers from gameshow host Pat Sajak and actress Morgan Fairchild, neither of whom apparently knows much of anything about the subject. Sajak's answer began, "I can't speak with much authority on the advisability from a financial perspective," and then proceeded unhelpfully from there. Fairchild had sense enough to stick to the obvious: "Consult a good financial planner for advice." Got it. Thanks.

**Race relations** (James Weldon Johnson, secretary, NAACP) In the year 2023, the Negro problem in the United States will not have entirely disappeared, but will be entirely changed. Through the constant forward changes in the Negro himself, which force constant changes in his local and national environment, the race, by 2022, will have achieved equality of political and civil status and of industrial, economic, and cultural opportunity, and the Negro problem will probably be reduced to a thin and wavering line of opposition to social recognition and intercourse.

**Women** (Mary Garrett Hay, chairwoman of the New York City League of Women Voters) Woman's drudgery in the household will be eliminated, her care of the family will be lessened, as new inventions come in and new methods of work. Women, like men, will do the tasks for which they are best fitted by temperament, gifts, and training.

Politically, women will be powerful.... If there is not a woman president, the thought of one will shock no one.

**Censorship** (John S. Sumner, secretary, New York Society for the Suppression of Vice) Back as far as the time of Louis XIV, work such as this society is engaged in was necessary and was being done. I don't believe human nature can change so much in a hundred years that in 2023 there will not be men to commercialize the weaknesses of their brothers. Hence this society, or a similar agency, will be functioning.

**The United States** (H. L. Mencken, author and critic) A hundred years hence, the United States will be a British colony. Its chief function will be to supply imbeciles to read the current British novels and docile cannon fodder for the British army.

## The Lower Case

### Endangered Fish Holds Up Water Plant

*Daily News Record* (Harrisonburg, VA), 3/2/13

### University of Colorado-Denver celebrates 40 years of forging identity

*The Denver Post*, 2/12/13

### Rapper Ja Rule leaves NY prison in gun case

*The Athens (NY) Messenger*, 2/22/13

### Lawmakers want to curb strikes with drones

*Orange County (CA) Register*, 2/6/13

### Risen Savior registering kids

*Tempe Republic*, 2/16/13

### Police: Middletown Man Hides Crack In His Buttocks

*Hartford Courant*, 3/13/13

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# An ink-stained stretch

Can Aaron Kushner save the *Orange County Register*—and the newspaper industry?

BY RYAN CHITTUM

**R**ob Curley, one of the more prominent digital journalists of the last decade, had just about had it with newspapers. Tired of laying people off and trading print dollars for digital dimes, he quit his job as chief content officer of the *Las Vegas Sun* last summer to take an executive job at a real-estate company.

But then a relatively unknown investor named Aaron Kushner called. Kushner and his partner, Eric Spitz, had just bought the *Orange County Register* and had an improbable (some would say impossible) plan to resurrect the gutted paper: Invest heavily in journalism—and in print. “I had no interest in coming to the *Register*,” says Curley, “but I sat down and talked to him and said, ‘Shoot, I’m coming.’”

Kushner, a 40-year-old former greeting-card executive with zero experience in newspapers, is running the most interesting—and important—experiment in journalism right now. His thesis is simple, but highly contrarian: Newspapers are dying in large part from self-inflicted wounds, and there’s money to be made in print, particularly from subscribers.

The first part of the thesis rests on the fact that publishers, faced with fierce competition from Craigslist and Google, not to mention a severe recession, reacted by slashing their newsrooms and putting out papers so thin, you could read them in minutes. In attempting to maintain double-digit profit margins in the face of an ad market that has changed forever, newspapers undermined—perhaps fatally—their long-term health.

The second part of Kushner’s thesis suggests that publishers listened too long to the siren song of the digital gurus, who told newspapers that they shouldn’t—and couldn’t—charge online, and that print journalism was hopelessly outdated. Plunging circulation stunned publishers, even as they charged hundreds of dollars a year for much weaker papers while giving away their content free online for 15 years.

For Kushner, the answer is to bet on readers. Give them really good journalism—lots of it—and charge them for it. “If

we are, every day, giving our subscribers more value, that creates more value for our advertisers, and for the community as a whole, then over the long term we can grow revenue,” he says.

It’s an audacious and expensive bet, and its outcome may reveal whether American newspapers can survive, much less flourish. Is Kushner—whose first entrepreneurial hit, by the way, was a dot-com—squandering his money on a hopelessly outdated business model? Or is he onto something?

“IF IT WERE JUST GREAT JOURNALISM, I’D BE AS SKEPTICAL as anybody else,” says Ken Brusic, who’s been the *Register*’s editor since 2002. “These guys, being from outside the industry, have looked at the business model and really turned it upside down.”

A fresh pair of eyes hasn’t always been a boon to the newspaper industry. Real-estate billionaire Sam Zell was a catastrophe for Tribune Company, and megaflack Brian Tierney flopped in Philadelphia. Avista Capital Partners and its lenders lost half a billion dollars on the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*, and Alden Global Capital couldn’t keep the Journal Register Company from sliding into bankruptcy (again).

All those bankruptcies, save the JRC’s, had something in common: Loads of debt used to fund purchase prices that reflected pre-2008 valuations, and severe cost cuts meant to prop up declining profit margins. Kushner had the benefit of buying *Register* parent Freedom Communications out of bankruptcy—after newspaper valuations had already fallen 90 percent in some cases. The *Register*’s newsroom and newshole had been chopped in half over the previous eight years, and its circulation was down 47 percent.

The changes were almost immediate. A recent run-of-the-mill Monday edition had 72 pages and eight standalone sections. The *Los Angeles Times*—once the *Register*’s hated rival in Orange County and a paper with nearly three times its print circulation—published 38 pages the same day. (*The Washington Post* printed 44, while *The New York Times* ran



**Betting man** Kushner bought the *Register* cheap and is investing in it heavily, including one of the biggest hiring sprees in newspaper history. Will it pay off?

48.) The *Register* has grown so fat that its Monday paper—typically the smallest edition of the week—approaches the size of Sunday papers in bigger markets. That week, the Sunday *Seattle Times*, a paper with comparable circulation, had just 94 pages. The *Register*'s Sunday paper had 242.

And it's not stuffed with wire copy, either. The Monday edition had roughly 50 *Register*-only bylined stories and columns, 85 staff or contributed photographs (most in color), and three major infographics. Over one week in late March and early April, CJR counted 167 ad pages, roughly 30 percent of the total pages printed.

While the ad-edit ratio can't match historic levels, the size of the paper is reminiscent of the *Register* at its peak. For much of its 108-year history, the *Register* was a cash machine controlled by the Hoiles family, whose rabid libertarianism helped form the politics of fast-growing Orange County.

Decades of the kind of family feuding that has upended many a newspaper empire presaged a 2003 leveraged buyout of some family members' stakes, which left Freedom Communications with too much debt when newspaper ads fell off the cliff. Its 2009 bankruptcy ended nearly 75 years of Hoiles family control, and private-equity investors took charge the next year as Freedom emerged from bankruptcy. Kushner's 2100 Trust bought Freedom last summer for an undisclosed sum.

For years, the *Register* had followed the best practices of the digital-first evangelists, focusing on luring pageviews to its free website at the expense of the quaint print journalism that still brought in almost all the money. Reporters had blogging and Web-traffic quotas, and a clicks scoreboard filled TV screens in the newsroom, touting the hottest posts.

That led to slideshows like "Sexy cafés are Little Saigon's twist on Hooters," and pieces like "Man's penis saved after getting stuck in dumbbell ring"—three paragraphs aggregated from the *Newport Beach Daily Pilot*, which became the *Register*'s fifth-most-clicked article of 2009. "You had to make the numbers," says Jonathan Lansner, a longtime *Register* business columnist and real-estate blogger, "so things got a little cheesy or stupid."

But it was all for naught. Staggering under the heavy debt load, along with the evaporation of print ads and the failure of digital-ad revenue to materialize in meaningful amounts, executives slashed the newsroom to 180 journalists by last summer, down from 380 a decade earlier. "The depth of the report on any given day was suspect," Lansner says. "How could it be any good when it was that small?"

Kushner shut down most of the *Register*'s blogs and re-focused reporters on "more quality, informative content." He expanded the page count by 50 percent, significantly increased the number of color pages, launched several new standalone sections, and even—get this—upgraded the quality of the paper stock.

Most important, he's gone on what must be one of the biggest hiring sprees in newspaper history, boosting the editorial staff by two thirds in less than a year. The *Register* has added investigative reporters, enlarged its graphics team, re-opened its DC bureau, and doubled staff at its 22 community weeklies. It has hired a James Beard Award-winning food critic and veterans of *The New York Times*, *Time*, and the *Los Angeles Times*, adding more than 140 journalists so far (plus about 100 in sales).

For a newsroom beaten down by years of diminishing resources, the changes are astonishing. "It is like living in a parallel universe," Brusic says. "You see the rest of the world, and you're doing something that's completely different."

Kushner's outsider perspective has resulted in some missteps. This spring, the *Register* launched weekly sections about three local universities that agreed to buy \$275,000 worth of ads for the year. The *Los Angeles Times* reported in March that the *Register*'s pitch to the University of California-Irvine promised that its section would "focus on achievement and success" and "reflect the excellence of UCI." And indeed, the university sections so far have been awfully soft, though *Register* management says it maintains editorial control.

Kushner also caused a stir when he told his newsroom that it's not its job to "afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted." He responded to his critics, noting that he has recently hired more accountability reporters than all the other US papers put together.

SEVEN YEARS AGO, NEWSPAPERS GOT BETWEEN \$4 AND \$5 in ads for every dollar of circulation revenue, a ratio that has dropped to two-to-one today on a 55-percent decline in

## The formula: Give readers good journalism—lots of it—and charge them for it.

ad revenue. In the meantime, circulation revenue remained roughly unchanged. Some papers, most notably *The New York Times* and the *Financial Times*, now get more money from subscribers, both print and online, than they do from advertisers—an historic shift.

The *Register* doesn't have the benefit of an international audience or a financial-industry focus. Brusic calls the *Register* the country's largest community newspaper, and that's where Kushner has deployed much of his effort and resources. He hired Curley, a veteran of the hyperlocal journalism movement, to head the local news group, which publishes weekly papers in Orange County's towns and cities. "I grew up in a small town where the local paper had half a page of who's visiting who in the nursing home," says Curley. The redone weeklies are "really old-school. It's your grandmother's newspaper, designed by the Design Institute."

The *Register* heavily covers high-school sports and publishes two pages of color photographs of the games in each weekly edition. It also started a weekly section called OC Varsity Arts that spotlights the non-jocks. Kushner is enamored with the idea of readers cutting out pictures from the paper and sticking them on the fridge. "You can't put an iPad on the refrigerator," he says. "You can't put it in a scrapbook. You can't tape it to your locker."

That Kushner thinks he can get smartphone-obsessed teenagers to pick up an old-fashioned newspaper—even if their friends are in it—signals that parts of his plan are a stretch. Because Freedom is privately held, it's unclear how much money Kushner and his partners are investing. The media analyst Ken Doctor estimated earlier this year that the annual tab for the newsroom hires and new print costs was roughly \$10 million, and that revenue gained from increased subscription prices could offset that. The *Register* has since hired another 50 journalists, adding perhaps \$4 million to \$5 million to that stunning number.

The big question is where the growth needed to counterbalance the ad decline will come from. The *Register* raised its print subscription rate to a dollar a day and installed a hard paywall, which has been unsuccessful most places it's been tried. The price for digital access? A dollar a day. "Our content's incredibly valuable, and our focus is on subscribers," Kushner says. "For the people who were in essence cannibalizing our business, they can make the decision: Either our content is valuable enough that they want to pay a dollar a day, or they don't, and we haven't done our job to convince them."

*The New York Times* and others have showed how a metered paywall model can work, preserving digital ad dollars while adding a new stream of subscription revenue and at the same time discouraging print readers from dropping the paper. The *Register* has gone another way. Its managers

say they're charging for the content, not the medium, but it's clear that this is a big bet on print. Yet the most conceivable future for newspapers, 10 or 20 years hence, is one in which they have converted print and hybrid subscribers to digital-only subscribers, shedding much of the cost of production and distribution. The *Register* will pick up few digital-only subscribers at \$30 a month, particularly when its website and tablet apps are so weak. If the bet is truly on content and not the medium, digital will require serious investment, too.

Kushner is also banking on the idea that advertisers have been fleeing print in part because readers have been fleeing it. Win them back and advertisers—not all, but some—will return. But will they? There are many other factors. "I suspect that a lot of what's happened in the last 20 years is that the journalism has suffered," says John Morton, a veteran industry analyst. "But how much of the decline in newspaper circulation can be attributed to that, and how much can be attributed to the Internet—who knows?"

Still, much of Kushner's model does make sense. American newspaper operations are still quite profitable, with operating margins that average between 8 percent and 10 percent, according to Morton. The rash of bankruptcies in the last three years was primarily due to debt loads tacked on by Wall Street mergers and acquisitions. Those bankrupt newspaper companies still posted significant operating profits, which exclude debt-service costs.

The profit margins are constantly pressured, though, by declining ad revenue. What's changed in the last two years is that many papers are offsetting most or all of those ad declines with money from subscribers.

Freedom Communications President Eric Spitz told Mathew Ingram in April that the *Register* was making its aggressive print revenue targets for the first two months of the year. The paper's next circulation report—due by the time you read this, at the end of April—will give an early indicator of the plan's potential. A relatively flat report would be good news. A sharp decline would not.

Kushner has already rolled out creative new ways to add value for readers and advertisers. The *Register* gave each subscriber a \$100 voucher to give ad space to their favorite charity, for example. The paper also signed a deal with the Los Angeles Angels to give subscribers unsold tickets to games, nudging the *Register* toward a membership model.

While it's far too early to tell whether Kushner's plan will work, it's fair to say that the odds are against it. Print advertising is—barring a miracle—in an inexorable tailspin. Readers have more sources for news and entertainment than ever, and print-loving stalwarts are aging rapidly. Print isn't picking up readers under 30, and it's unclear how successful charging them full freight online will be.

But if Kushner fails, he will have gone down investing in journalism. And he says he's in it for the long haul. "I don't think that our model is for everybody," Kushner says. "It takes a really long-term commitment. We have no institutional investors. We have no plans for an exit. We bought this basically to own it indefinitely." **CJR**

RYAN CHITTUM writes for *The Audit*, CJR's business desk.

# Sticking with the truth

How 'balanced' coverage helped sustain the bogus claim that childhood vaccines can cause autism

BY CURTIS BRAINARD

In 1998, *The Lancet*, one of the most respected medical journals, published a study by lead author Andrew Wakefield, a British physician who claimed there might be a link between the vaccine for measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) and autism, the developmental disorder that afflicts one out of every 88 children in the US. The paper coincided with growing concern among parents in the US and UK about a possible connection between the rising number of childhood vaccinations and the rising rate of autism among kids. Although the trends were only coincidental, Wakefield's paper helped spark a debate about the supposed link that has played out in the media over the last 15 years.

Among scientists, however, there really was never much of a debate; only a small group of researchers ever even entertained the theory about autism. The coverage rarely emphasized this, if it noted it at all, and instead propagated misunderstanding about vaccines and autism and gave credence to what was largely a manufactured controversy. As Ben Goldacre, a British doctor and media critic, wrote in his 2008 bestseller, *Bad Science*: "[Y]ou will see news reporters, including the BBC, saying stupid things like 'The research has since been debunked.' Wrong. The research never justified the media's ludicrous over-interpretation. If they had paid attention, the scare would never have even started."

The consequences of this coverage go beyond squandering journalistic resources on a bogus story. There is evidence that fear of a link between vaccines and autism, stoked by press coverage, caused some parents to either delay vaccinations for their children or decline them altogether. To be sure, more than 90 percent of children in both the US and the UK receive the recommended shots according to schedule, but in 2012, measles infections were at an 18-year high in the UK, reflecting low and bypassed immunization in some areas. In the US, vaccine-preventable diseases reached an all-time low in 2011, but the roughly one in 10 children who get their shots over a different timeframe than the one recommended

by the medical establishment, and the less than 1 percent who go entirely unvaccinated, are enough to endanger some communities. And American and British authorities have blamed recent outbreaks of measles and whooping cough on decisions to delay or decline vaccination.

Beginning in 2004, Brian Deer, a British investigative journalist, brought a measure of redemption to journalism's performance on this story, publishing a series of articles about improprieties in Wakefield's work that culminated with the British General Medical Council stripping Wakefield of his license to practice in 2010, and *The Lancet* retracting his paper. For most journalists, that should have effectively put an end to the autism story. But those who never bought the vaccine-autism link—in the press and elsewhere—have been waiting for the proverbial nail in the coffin on this story for years, and it never seems to come. In April, for instance, *The Independent* in London published an op-ed by Wakefield, in which he trotted out his argument about the MMR vaccine in the context of the current measles outbreak in Wales.

CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF, THE AUTISM SCARE DIDN'T begin immediately after publication of Wakefield's 1998 paper. Initially, science and health journalists who, as Goldacre and others have noted, "were often fairly capable of balancing risks and evidence," handled most of the coverage and kept the story in its proper context. But the scare began to gain momentum in 2001, driven in large part by Wakefield, but also by the refusal of then-Prime Minister Tony Blair and his wife to say whether or not they had vaccinated their son, Leo, which raised suspicions nationwide. (Years later, they acknowledged that Leo was, in fact, vaccinated on schedule.)

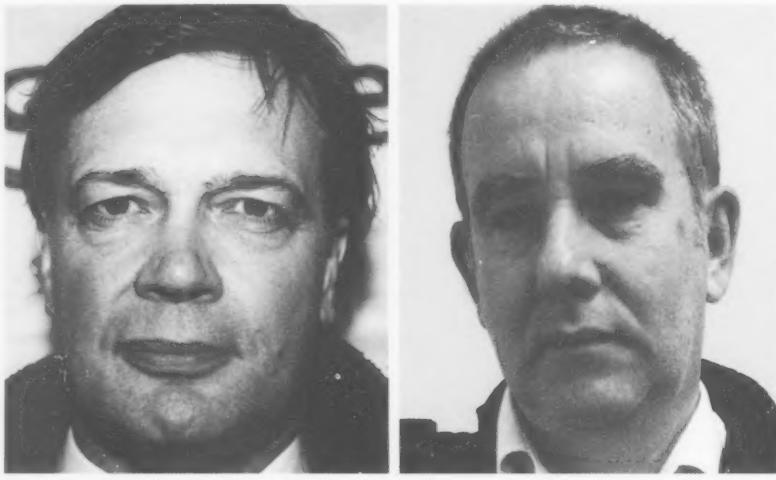
In the US, Wakefield's paper didn't garner much media attention at first. Concern about a link between vaccines and autism had quietly built among parents and some physicians throughout the 1990s, but it revolved around vaccines containing the preservative thimerosal, not around Wakefield's

specific concerns about the MMR vaccine. It wasn't until a year later, when the Food and Drug Administration recommended removing thimerosal from childhood vaccines as a precautionary measure—stressing that it could find no positive link with autism—that the American press tucked into the debate. In 2000, Dan Burton, a former Republican Congressman from Indiana who believes that vaccines caused his grandson's autism, held congressional hearings wherein he asked the Department of Health and Human Services to study the alleged link, and Wakefield made his way into *The New York Times* for the first time. The 820-word story, buried on page 20, emphasized the danger of sowing mis-

fellow congregants, many of whom were also unvaccinated, and triggered what at the time was the largest measles outbreak in the US in nine years. "Concern about adverse events, particularly related to media reports of a putative association between vaccinations and autism and of the dangers of thimerosal, appeared to play a major role in the decision of these families to decline vaccination," according to a 2006 study published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

The year of the Indiana outbreak was a banner year for promoting the autism-vaccine link in the media. That summer, *Rolling Stone* and *Salon* published Robert Kennedy Jr.'s article alleging that the federal government covered up the danger of vaccines. A laundry list of corrections and clarifications followed, and in 2011, *Salon* retracted the article (*Rolling Stone* never did).

But it was the work of two veteran journalists, not Kennedy's shameful piece, that really kept the story simmering. In February 2005, St. Martin's Press published *Evidence of Harm* by journalist David Kirby, in which Kirby didn't reach any specific conclusions about a link but presented a litany of parental suspicions that suggested one. And that winter, Dan Olmsted, a senior editor at United Press International, turned out a series called "Age of Autism," for which he conducted an admittedly unscientific survey that found lower autism rates among ostensibly unvaccinated Amish communities (other studies found that vaccination rates are high in those communities). Few newspapers picked up



**The damage done** A study by Andrew Wakefield, left, helped fuel media attention to the vaccine-autism story, until Brian Deer exposed his work as deeply flawed.

trust of vaccines and the fact that the mainstream medical community considered them safe. Then, six months later, Wakefield appeared on *60 Minutes*, where he linked vaccines to what he called an "epidemic of autism." In 2002, Burton held more hearings that led to more stories on the dangers of vaccines. Major reports from the Institute of Medicine, part of the National Academy of Sciences, in 2001 and 2004, rejected the link and drew a lot of coverage, but the level of concern among the public remained on the rise.

A number of studies linked coverage by the British media in that early period to declining rates of vaccinations and outbreaks of rare diseases. But again, the effect was slower to take hold in the US. In 2008, a group of epidemiologists in Philadelphia compared annual MMR immunization rates from 1995 to 2004 to coverage that mentioned a link with autism. Their study, published in the journal *Pediatrics*, found that MMR vaccinations started to decline in the US years before news coverage took off in 2001, suggesting "a limited influence of mainstream media on MMR immunization in the United States."

That influence soon began to grow, however. In 2005, an unvaccinated Indiana teenager returned from a church trip to a Romanian orphanage, where she'd unknowingly contracted measles. The next day, she attended a gathering of

Olmsted's articles, but they got the attention of Representative Carolyn Maloney, a Democrat from New York. In March 2006, Maloney held a briefing at the National Press Club, where she cited Olmsted's work as her motivation for drafting legislation that would compel the federal government to study autism rates in unvaccinated populations.

Maloney's bill went nowhere, but Kirby and Olmsted went on to build their careers around the idea that a link exists in some children. Olmsted launched Age of Autism in November 2007, branding it the "Daily Web Newspaper of the Autism Epidemic"; it continues to be one of the most popular sites for those who doubt, or are concerned about, the safety of vaccines. And Kirby has written numerous columns on the subject for The Huffington Post. (HuffPost has long been a sympathetic home for the vaccine-autism crowd; it published a number of misleading pieces by celebrity-advocate Jenny McCarthy, for instance, whose son has autism. McCarthy's fame allowed her to spread her theories far and wide in the media, including via influential TV programs like *Oprah* and *Ellen*.)

CJR, too, played a role in sustaining the vaccine story. In a 2005 piece, Daniel Schulman, who's now an editor at *Mother Jones*, advised that it was "too soon for the press to shut the door on the debate" about vaccines and thimerosal.

Yet evidence in support of closing that door continued to pile up, and if history remembers no other journalist who fought back against the spurious claims about vaccines, it will remember Brian Deer. Between 2004 and 2011, the investigative reporter produced a series of reports for *The Sunday Times* of London, the UK's Channel 4 Television, and the *British Medical Journal* (BMJ) that exposed how Wakefield had exhibited a pattern of gross medical misconduct in his work on the vaccine-autism question, including the unethical treatment of children and undisclosed conflicts of interest. After *The Lancet* retracted Wakefield's 1998 paper and he was stripped of his medical license, the *British Medical Journal* published Deer's *coup de grace*: a series revealing that Wakefield had actually doctored medical histories presented in his 1998 paper. In an accompanying editorial, the BMJ accused Wakefield of perpetrating an "elaborate fraud."

BETWEEN 1998 AND 2006, 60 PERCENT OF VACCINE-AUTISM articles in British newspapers, and 49 percent in American papers, were "balanced," in the sense that they either mentioned both pro-link and anti-link perspectives, or neither perspective, according to a 2008 study by Christopher Clarke at Cornell University. The remainder—40 percent in the British press and 51 percent in the American press—mentioned only one perspective or the other, but British journalists were more likely to focus on pro-link claims and the Americans were more likely to focus on anti-link claims.

While it's somewhat reassuring that almost half the US stories (41 percent) tried, to varying degrees, to rebut the vaccine-autism connection, the study raises the problem of "objectivity" in stories for which a preponderance of evidence is on one side of a "debate." In such cases, "balanced" coverage can be irresponsible, because it suggests a controversy where none really exists. (Think climate change, and how such he-said-she-said coverage helped sustain the illusion of a genuine debate within the science community.) A follow-up study by Clarke and Graham Dixon, published in November 2012, makes this point. The two scholars assigned 320 undergrads to read either a "balanced" article or one that was one-sided for or against a link between vaccines and autism. Those students who read the "balanced" articles were far more likely to believe that a link existed than those who read articles that said no link exists.

In that context, Susan Dominus's 2011 profile of Andrew Wakefield in *The New York Times Magazine* is problematic. Dominus trailed Wakefield around Texas, where he now lives, as he continued to proselytize to one crowd after another. And while her story was highly critical of Wakefield, the decision to publish it at all was controversial among science journalists. Some worried that people would undoubtedly read it as martyr story; others argued that journalists should simply stop paying attention to Wakefield.

Reporters don't need Wakefield, however, to keep this story alive. Also in 2011, Robert MacNeil, a former host of *PBS NewsHour*, came out of retirement to produce a six-part series for the program, called "Autism Now." In part one, MacNeil interviewed his daughter, Alison, whose son

has autism, and let her make unfounded claims about vaccines. MacNeil, who narrated the series, told viewers there was no scientific evidence to support those claims, but it was a throwaway line that allowed MacNeil to claim "balance" while sowing serious misunderstanding about vaccines.

Thankfully, the Web is now full of watchdogs who are looking out for such shenanigans. One is Seth Mnookin, author of *The Panic Virus*, who wrote a blog post calling the PBS series "an embarrassing coda" to MacNeil's career.

TODAY, PEOPLE WHO WORRY THAT CHILDHOOD INOCULATIONS trigger autism prefer to be described as "vaccine-hesitant," rather than "anti-vaccine," and think the CDC's immunization schedule "overwhelms" kids' immune systems. This rhetorical shift is illustrates how those who claim a link exists keep moving the goalposts. For the last three years, the idea that the shots are "too much, too soon" has been the argument of last resort in the face of mounting evidence that vaccines have nothing to do with autism. Accordingly, federal authorities have stepped up efforts to reassure people that the number, frequency, timing, order, and age at which vaccines are given is safe.

In January and March, the Institute of Medicine and the CDC both released evaluations of the current vaccination schedule—which includes as many as 24 immunizations by a child's second birthday—and reiterated that the shots are unrelated to autoimmune diseases, asthma, hypersensitivity, seizures, or learning and developmental disorders. While it's true that children today get more shots than they once did, it's not the number of shots that the body notices, but rather the amount of antigens—the substances that produce an immune response—they contain. These days, thanks to the development of more efficient vaccines, a child is exposed to a maximum of 315 antigens by the time he turns two, compared with "several thousand" in the late 1990s.

The US media greeted the reports with a collective yawn. In some sense, the media's apathy is welcome, as there was never any proof that the vaccination schedule was unsafe to begin with. But it would be unfortunate if part of the autism story's legacy is that reporters and editors are wary of tackling any story about vaccine safety. Because there are rare, but genuine, safety issues with vaccines that the public needs to know about. In a series of articles for Reuters in January and February, reporter Kate Kelland described how a Finnish researcher endured months of ridicule and accusations from colleagues while trying to establish a link between a flu vaccine called Pandemrix and an outbreak of narcolepsy among children in Europe. Eventually, other studies confirmed the link, Kelland reported, but she added a cautionary note: "After the false alarm sounded by British doctor Andrew Wakefield, some scientists say they are more hesitant to credit reports of potential side effects from vaccines." That chilling effect might extend to journalists as well; Kelland was one of only a few reporters in the US or the UK to cover the Pandemrix story. **CJR**

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CURTIS BRAINARD runs *The Observatory*, CJR's science and environment blog.



# Tight shots

MICHAEL KAMBER'S NEW BOOK, *PHOTOJOURNALISTS ON War: The Untold Stories from Iraq*, is a vital record of a conflict that will shape America, and Iraq, for decades to come. Kamber, who covered the war from beginning to end, founded the Bronx Documentary Center, a nonprofit gallery and educational space dedicated to documentary work around the world. Below is an excerpt from the book's introduction.

This book grew out of late-night conversations with my fellow photojournalists: in plywood shacks on army bases in Mosul, on long drives through Sadr City, and on Baghdad rooftops as the occasional Katyusha crashed down across the Tigris.

Photographers are storytellers; most love to talk. As a group, I believe we saw more of the actual ground war than any group of civilian observers, save for the Iraqis, of course. When things got really bad, the TV crews often set up on the rooftops; some writers went out, but many worked the phones, or sent Iraqi stringers to the streets. The photographers had no options; if there was to be a picture in the newspaper the next day, the photojournalists were going out.

And so I learned something each time I sat down with a photojournalist. Stories unspooled about the invasion and the siege of Fallujah, about car bombings and the civil war, about run-ins with military brass. What I was hearing were the stories behind the news, stories I had not seen in the media, stories that sounded like history.

I left Iraq repeatedly and returned home to a public largely apathetic and poorly informed about the war. There was plenty of good reporting out there, and good photojournalism. Yet I lived with a nagging feeling that Americans were not seeing the war I knew.

By 2007 the embed rules had tightened considerably. The following became explicitly or effectively off limits: wounded and dead American soldiers; caskets of dead Americans; memorials for dead Americans (which we had previously been invited to); funerals at Arlington Cemetery (even when soldiers' families requested media presence); Iraqi prisoners; car-bomb scenes. Franco Pagetti, the Italian photojournalist, and I were sent on civil affair patrols where soccer balls were distributed to children—this as battles raged nearby, battles we were kept away from. "It's for your own safety," we were told, as we loudly protested. And so censorship became the starting point for this book.

As I talked with my fellow photojournalists, I heard some of the same complaints, but their stories were also more complex. I was intrigued by how many photographers found sympathetic US commanders, were able to get graphic photos of the fighting and of US casualties, and told me that their editors refused to publish these images. And then the photographers' stories went off in different directions. They rambled on about their families, their relationships, other conflicts, post-traumatic stress, the radically changing nature of the press. At first I tried to steer the conversations back to censorship. Then I let my friends talk, and this book became about something larger. **CJR**

**Ground war** Following a raid in Ramadi in 2006, a US soldier watches over an Iraqi man who collapsed after being arrested.

GUY CALAF



# Streams of consciousness

Millennials expect a steady diet of quick-hit, social-media-mediated bits and bytes. What does that mean for journalism?

BY BEN ADLER

My first encounters with journalism were the same as most American males: through the sports pages. Sometime in middle school I started picking up *The New York Times* on my parents' dining table during breakfast and reading the Sports section to catch up on the Yankees and Knicks. West Coast games were frequently too late for the home-delivery edition, and the standings were a day out of date, which would probably strike today's middle-schooler as comically archaic or incomprehensible. Despite that shortcoming, a deeply ingrained habit was formed: The day

starts by perusing *The New York Times*. And now I read the *Times* for the same reason that I eat Hebrew National hot dogs, tie my necktie in a schoolboy knot, and aspire to buy a brownstone: because it's what my parents did.

But I'm 31, a dinosaur browsing the Internet on my computer. Today's 23-year-old—never mind a 12-year-old—probably doesn't get his news by perusing the homepage of the website of his parents' favorite newspaper. And even I click on more daily news links on my smartphone or from Twitter and Facebook than from website homepages.

This is simply the norm for the generation that entered adulthood in the age of the Internet: adults born between 1978 and (depending on whom you ask) sometime in the 1990s, now aged 18 to about 34—a group Madison Avenue has dubbed Generation Y, or the millennials.

Of course, change is never uniform across ages and social groups, or even within a specific group. Wealth and education correlate with early adoption of expensive new technologies. And those in certain professions—journalism, public relations, finance, and politics, to name the most obvious—must always stay ahead of the information curve.

However, studies show that several emerging shifts—from print and broadcast television to digital news, from computers to mobile devices, and from homepage browsing to social-media filtration—are all widespread among millennials.

How does it change the value of journalism to strip away the context that a credible publication provides? A reader

who comes through a social-media side door is given no sense of a story's relative importance. A blog post on the latest fad diet that would never have made it onto the front page, or even into print at all, can go viral and attract far more readers than the latest news from Syria. Readers who no longer page through a newspaper or sit through the evening news are bound to miss some information they might not click on but could benefit from knowing nonetheless.

To get a sense of these evolving patterns of news consumption, and their implications, I interviewed some two dozen young journalists (mostly editors of new digital publications), as well as social-media directors, digital-media executives, academics, and researchers.

I found four overlapping, and mutually reinforcing, trends:

**Proliferation** of news sources, formats, and new technologies for media consumption

**Participation** by consumers in the dissemination and creation of news, through social-media sharing, commenting, blogging, and the posting online of photos, audio, and video

**Personalization** of one's streams of news via email, mobile apps, and social media

**Source promiscuity** Rather than having strong relationships with a handful of media brands, young people graze among a vast array of news outlets.

Here are some specific insights, as well as a few nascent trends worth watching.

### They're an intrinsic part of the process

Social-media tools allow anyone with a Facebook or Twitter account to play a role in determining how many readers a story reaches. And online communities such as the heavily trafficked Reddit enable readers to submit links to their favorite content, and vote up or down the content submitted by others, thereby changing a given item's prominence on the site. The result is that the mainstream-media oligopoly is now just one force deciding what "the news" is and how important a story or image might be.

"Over the last 100 years, you go from a point when a newspaper would be able to set the tone and the five top stories of the day, to what Walter Cronkite and his cohort would say on

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In the last 100 years, you go from newspapers setting the news agenda to a near-infinite number of people who can.

the evening news, and then to the explosion of cable news, and now the Internet," says Gabriel Snyder, 36, the editor of The Atlantic Wire and former editor in chief of Gawker. "We've gone from having just a few handfuls of places that might set the agenda to this proliferation that is reaching a near infinite number of people who can define what the top story is today."

Since many young people share on social media what they consume online, their notion of what makes an item good is tied to an outward, rather than inward-looking, set of priorities. "Media is now a way for readers to communicate, not just consume content," says Jonah Peretti, 39, the founder of BuzzFeed who earlier helped to launch The Huffington Post. As he points out, people pause before sharing an article or video to ponder what it says about them that they are promoting it. "Social sharing is about your identity," says Peretti. "You want to say, 'Look, I'm smart, or charitable, or funny.'"

Callie Schweitzer, 24, director of marketing and communications for Vox Media, a fast-growing network of new online publications, agrees. "How we get and share news has become much more reflective of who we are," she says. "People are proud to have gotten something first, and they want to be known for having found the cool piece of video first." Also working to develop its editorial style with an eye toward shareability is Quartz, a business website launched last fall by Atlantic Media. Zach Seward, 27, a senior editor there, argues: "Putting the lede in the lede is *burying* the lede; get it in the headline! If there is a striking fact or statistic that tells the story, it should be the headline—the kind of thing you want to tweet."

And what would you want to tweet? In essence, any factoid that a follower might find remarkable and therefore

clickworthy. Pieces of content that pop on social media tend to have a certain "wow" factor. Editors routinely mention visuals—usually photographs, but sometimes charts or other graphics—as being enormously helpful in making something go viral in social media. Social-media companies agree. "Tumblr is a very visual medium," says Mark Coatney, media outreach director for the image-friendly microblogging platform. "Twitter rewards words; Tumblr rewards visually presented info, whether great photography or graphics that grab your eye."

Hard news—especially the depressing kind—is less popular than lighter lifestyle coverage on social media. "If you look at stories being shared, no one shares news," observes Alex Leo, 30, head of Web products for Thomson-Reuters Digital and a former senior editor at HuffPost. "No one ever emails '73 People Killed in Iraq.' They email stories like 'Sitting Kills You.'" Sure enough, on the day I spoke with Leo, *The New York Times*'s five most-emailed stories were a Style section feature called "The End of Courtship?", a Travel section list of "46 Places to Go in 2013," a column by Woody Allen riffing on hypochondria, and advice pieces on parenting and money management.

By posting observations and arguments on everything from personal blogs and discussion boards to Twitter feeds and comment threads, every young person is now, on some level, an amateur journalist. As bandwidth and connection speeds have increased, they are also publishing vast quantities of photos and videos with the help of services like Instagram, Flickr, and YouTube.

Increasingly, established news outlets are turning to these on-the-ground snippets of raw material to report on important social issues, from the Occupy protests to the presidential election. Twitter has famously been used for disseminating eyewitness accounts of events such as the Arab Spring uprising. Instagram, a swiftly growing service that is essentially Twitter for photographs instead of text, allows anyone to take a photo and effortlessly post it online. Instagram shots taken during Hurricane Sandy, for example, went viral on social-media outlets and were even published by mainstream news organizations.

Since Instagram was bought by Facebook, in April 2012, its photos are no longer allowed on Twitter itself. But Twitter now has its own short-video tool, called Vine, which allows users to record and post 6-second videos to their feed with just a few clicks on their smartphone. "The new generation on social media is much more visual than it was in the past," says Mark Luckie, 30, manager of journalism and news at Twitter. "It used to be 140 characters [per tweet], and that's it. Now we're seeing many more tweets that have photos or videos." On the allure of the image, he adds: "That's why media outlets often include a photo and a link saying, 'Click here to read more.' It's just like how newspapers often include a photo on page A1 to lure people in."

But as in traditional media, selection is crucial. Merely sticking a generic image on every item won't accomplish nearly as much as a well-chosen one. "Photos have always been really popular on Facebook—it's the most popular piece of content that people upload and interact with,"

## That's incredible

How students at one California high school are learning to discern what is (and isn't) news

"A lot of students believe all news is created equal," says Alan Miller of the News Literacy Project, which helps kids learn to assess the information they encounter. "At a younger age, they sometimes believe that if someone put it online, it must be true." Older high-school students grow more wary of "bias, whether personal, commercial, or ideological."

To get a closer look at the cohort coming up behind the millennials, CJR in March asked the students in Esther Wojcicki's classes at California's Palo Alto High School how they view the news ecosystem. Founded by Wojcicki in 1984, Palo Alto's is the largest scholastic journalism program in the US, serving 600 kids. (And Wojcicki herself has serious cred in these parts: Google began in her daughter Susan's garage—Susan's still a Google exec—and daughter Anne, cofounder of 23andMe, is married to Google cofounder Sergey Brin.)

As ninth grader Jamie Har put it: "By the time I hear the news, the story has already passed through several people. I cannot know whether the information is completely accurate or how much opinion is in what I hear. Most of the time, the news does not interest me enough for me to go look up more about it." Sounds like a normal teenager, right?

Ten of their essays are excerpted here; see CJR.org for the full text.

**As a teenager in today's society, I spend a great deal of time every day on my cell phone. Fortunately, as it is a smart phone, I have access at my fingertips to thousands of news sources. Many of the nation's top new sources, such as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *cnn* have created apps for mobile devices. This way, rather than sit down and read the paper every morning, I can get my news wherever and whenever I please.**

As a high-school student, I am constantly on the go, and I hardly have time to sit down for breakfast every morning, much less time to read or watch the news. Thus I really appreciate the easy accessibility mobile news apps provide, since I can scroll through them and get the latest updates while I wait in line for my coffee or have extra time in between classes.

—Angela Stern, grade 11

I turn to mobile apps and quick snippets of news on social media sites (such as a *cnn* post on *facebook*) out of convenience. However, this convenience comes at a cost. With brevity, news sources often lose not only the details of a story, but critical pieces of information.

—Heather Strathearn, grade 11

Personally, the only exposure I get to news and current events is through Reddit, and I mostly only see updates about things like the situation in North Korea.

I don't watch that much TV, and when I do, it's on Netflix....I don't read the newspaper, and when I want to get updates on a certain thing that involves the news, I would go to *The New York Times* website or ask my parents.

—Nikhil Rajaram, grade 9

I am constantly worrying about the credibility of my news. In today's world it is quite difficult to come across a perfectly unopinionated news source, as many news companies use the news to promote their own agendas....I am always closely watching the news to make sure that it isn't mixing fact and opinion. I know that the majority of my news is unbiased, because when I use different news sources to read the same article, I am always able to notice slight, subtle differences that give news outlets their uniqueness.

—James Pedersen, grade 9

As a high-school teenager, accessing news is not my major concern. My main focuses are currently my academics, after-school activities, and friends. I do not spend time to find news reports on the radio, TV, or online. I don't really talk about news with my friends, either. The few times I actually know about news are when my Facebook news feed becomes flooded with statuses, people talk at school, I see posters or advertisements, or my parents discuss a news issue.

Occasionally, I will look up news from a direct source, but they are online sources that I do not always know are credible. Just as I cannot know the credibility of the news I hear from other people and from social networks, I do not know how censored the news is before they tell me. It is important that people receive full, correct information regarding all aspects of an issue—but many people, including me, do not usually care about news that isn't directly related to themselves enough to make an active effort to verify its credibility. This makes it easy for big news networks to only share news about interesting topics that will catch people's attention, whether or not it is important or complete.

—Jamie Har, grade 9

People choose which sources they choose to read or listen to and accept as the truth. Most people do not want to hear things that they do not agree with. In this way, people further their bias by their own means.

—Julia Kwasnick, grade 11

I think that the credibility of a news source is always an issue, and Twitter is not the ideal place to go if you want to be properly informed. There is no way to know whether you are getting good information on Twitter.

—Maya Kandell, grade 9

If I hear the news from multiple sources, then I will assume it's true. All the sources can't be wrong. I trust sources like *CNN* or *BBC*, because they usually have unbiased stories....I don't go in search of news, but if I come across news from *The New York Times*, I will assume it's credible.

—Ariya Momeny, grade 9

I was once searching for news online outside of my reliable aggregate of *The Economist*, *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, and *Time* magazine. I ended up stumbling upon *The Onion*, a satirical news organization that mocks people and events; in short, the news is mostly false. But at the time, I did not know that. Even after seeing articles like "Panicked Biden Interrupts State Of The Union To Ask If Erections Can Ever Be Medical Emergency," I almost believed them.

The Internet is filled with "news" sources akin to *The Onion*, but many of those sources are more dangerous to the public. *The Onion* boasts jarring but obviously false headers—an avid news reader would have an intuition that the story and thus the source is false. Other sources are far less obvious. The veracity of the information proliferated online is dwindling; there are so many more online news sources, but more and more cannot be trusted. Even worse, we do not know which ones to trust.

—Stephenie Zhang, grade 11

This proliferation of sources available to us seems to make our lives easier, and spread awareness of current events. However, we do not often consider fact-checking, and therefore become imprinted with more and more biases and exaggerations that we are unable to distinguish. In a democratic society, where we each will eventually have voting power, this has an incredibly negative effect. Our naïveté leaves us vulnerable to advertising and political statements, leaving us quite unprepared and undereducated as we enter the world of voters. Students who have not been able to take journalism classes do not know how to accurately judge the reliability of their sources, and cannot therefore become the accurately informed citizens we need to take on leadership roles in the next generation.

—Shivonne Logan, grade 11

says Vadim Lavrusik, 27, journalism program manager at the social-network giant. "Bigger images get higher click-throughs, and ones of logos that aren't real images of something don't work as well."

*The New York Times* has figured out at least one way to appeal to Tumblr's photo-crazy users: "The Lively Morgue," which posts several photographs from the *Times*'s vast archives every week. "That's a way the *Times* can make a *Times*-y Tumblr blog, but fun and lively," says Aron Pilhofer, 47, the newspaper's editor of interactive news.

If you're wondering why the *Times* cares about having a successful Tumblr presence, you're clearly over 40. Tumblr, which the average middle-aged American has probably never heard of, is an Internet behemoth, heavily skewed toward the young. There are some 100 million Tumblr blogs, drawing 172 million monthly unique visitors. Roughly 60 percent of Tumblr's audience is under the age of 34, and more than half of that group is under 24. "Go to where young people are; don't expect them to come to you," says Jessica Bennett, 31, executive editor of Tumblr until her department was eliminated in April.

In addition to being a forum for reaching younger readers, Tumblr is a launching pad for content throughout social media. When Starbucks announced that it was introducing a new larger cup size in 2011, graphic artist Andrew Barr of the National Post of Canada made an illustration showing that it was larger than the capacity of the average human stomach. A Web producer posted it to the National Post Art & Design Tumblr blog, and it was reblogged widely, picked up by the Huffington Post, Gizmodo, and Buzzfeed, and discussed by Anderson Cooper on CNN. It received thousands of retweets and Facebook likes.

So photos aren't the only kind of image that goes viral. Rather it is content that makes the person you share it with feel something, whether shock, amazement, or delight. While that may mean random ephemera like the infamous video of a chain-smoking toddler in Indonesia, it can also describe serious enterprise reporting. Vice Media has broken through with short gonzo documentaries like *The Vice Guide to Karachi*. "We're exploring the insanity of the modern condition," says Jason Mojica, Vice's lead video producer, adding that the Vice website tries to focus on "things that make you say, 'Holy shit! I can't believe this exists!'"

### They feel strongly about trust, taste, and tone

Back in the dark ages of the 20th century, one typically had to choose a handful of news brands and forgo the content offered elsewhere. For example, a reader living in New York or Boston might subscribe to the *Times* or the *Globe* rather than *The Washington Post*, and just accept the fact that sometimes her hometown paper would not have that day's most

important inside-the-Beltway story. Now, anyone can read the three most important political stories of the day from three different sources based in three different cities. So there is also a need for someone to sort through all those different sources, and others, to find the best or most important stories every day.

A key factor at play here is that many young people have come of age amid growing suspicion of experts of all types, and they are exposed to increasingly bitter partisan critiques of mainstream reporting. In September 2012, Gallup reported that "Americans' distrust in the media hit a new high this year, with 60 percent saying they have little or no trust in the mass media to report the news fully, accurately, and fairly."

A recent study by George Washington University and the market-research firm ORI finds this skepticism especially pronounced among young people. According to the report, 24 percent of American adults overall say information they get on social networks is of the same quality or of higher

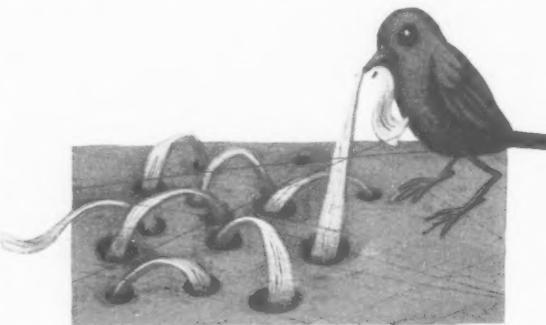
quality than that from traditional media outlets, versus 39 percent who say it is about the same quality and 31 percent who say it is of lower quality. But among those 18 to 25 years old, 31 percent said social networks provide higher-quality information than that of regular media, and only 25 percent said social networks offer information of generally lower quality. That's a significant change from the Cronkite era of mainstream media authority.

"For years, people didn't see information on social media as equally trustworthy," says study author Dr. David Rehr, a professor at GWU's graduate school of political management. Social-media news, he adds, "has moved into the mainstream of quality information."

Those who no longer believe what the media tell them turn to people they do trust to help them decide what to think. "People don't know who to trust, so they trust their friends," says Jen Nedeau, 28, a director at the digital advertising firm Bully Pulpit Interactive. "People read what their friends recommend."

In other words, young people do not want to entrust the decision about what's news to the editors of one geographically proximate newspaper or another mainstream media outlet. They want to decide for themselves, via specialized streams. But the Internet has created such a deafening cacophony of information that they cannot sort it all by themselves. That would be a full-time job. And so it is, for some people. They are known as aggregators.

In the first decade of the 21st century, websites such as The Huffington Post garnered massive traffic for their fast-twitch aggregation, summarizing, quoting from, and linking to the sexiest and hardest-hitting news stories, catering to obsessives who would check in frequently. But many young



consumers prefer to have their news filtered by an individual or a publication with a personality rather than by a traffic-seeking robot or algorithm. They like to see news that is selected, and sometimes analyzed, through the prism of a certain sensibility or set of interests.

Many blogs and websites have found great success with this approach (particularly if they add a dollop of attitude, in the tradition of The Drudge Report, which began as a gossip column in 1996). TalkingPointsMemo, founded in 2000, examines the news through a serious, if slightly sardonic, lefty lens, in the image of its chief blogger and editor, Josh Marshall. Gawker, begun 10 years ago by blog impresario Nick Denton, made its reputation with snarky takes on media, politics, and popular culture. And Andrew Sullivan's blog, the Dish—which employs a team of like-minded writers and interns—is largely a collection of links to outside stories, with a heavy focus on his favored political causes, such as civil liberties and gay rights. On the strength of the blog's 1.3 million monthly unique visitors—one-third of whom are younger than 35—Sullivan decided to leave The Daily Beast late last year, and is now running the site as a free-standing, reader-supported operation. (After an enthusiastic show of financial support early on, subscriptions have slowed, and Sullivan recently tweaked his payment model.)

At these outlets, the editor—Marshall, Denton, Sullivan—is the public embodiment of the blog's attitude and ethos. Not coincidentally, all of these sites are also known for the loyalty and active involvement of their readers. TPM famously relied on readers across the nation to contribute reports about the firing of US Attorneys, which added up to a major Bush-era scandal. Sullivan frequently quotes commenters, often at great length, and Gawker is the envy of the Internet for its volume of high-quality user feedback.

The contrast with traditional media is stark. How many readers can tell you about the personality of their local paper's editor? "I think the invisibility of editors has really hurt news organizations," says Ann Friedman, 31, the former executive editor of *Good* and a weekly Web columnist for *New York* magazine and CJR. "Except for the occasional ombudsman and the very top editors at The New York Times, I don't know who's curating my news. When I go to Andrew Sullivan, or the Hairpin, or [The Atlantic's] Ta-Nehisi Coates, I know who is curating my news."

The idea has long been that an editor is "this faceless, objective Wizard of Oz type," to maintain the appearance of objectivity. "Editors should be communicating as humans with their readers," Friedman says. "The idea that you're getting a point of view is important. It's not necessarily a left or right political view; it's just knowing you'll get a certain type of tone and content."

#### They like having the news find them

A corollary to the existence of empowered and participatory news consumers is that media organizations must now be simultaneously more aggressive in reaching out to them and more humble in their tone when doing so. One can no longer simply produce strong content and rest assured that readers or viewers will order a subscription or tune in every night.

They must try to be everywhere their potential readers are: on social-media platforms, in their email inbox, and in their mobile device's app store. "We're moving from 'pull,' where you request your morning newspaper, to 'push,' where links are being put in front of you in your morning inbox or Twitter stream," says Quartz's Seward.

Sites like The Atlantic Wire, Slate, and The Daily Beast have recently found success by distributing their take on the day's news through the digital revolution's oldest invention: email. Newsletters such as Slate's "The Slatest" and The Daily Beast's "The Cheat Sheet" are the modern equivalent of *Time* or *Newsweek*, catering to the upper-middlebrow tranche of online news consumers. For them, it used to be

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**'Invisibility of editors has really hurt news organizations,' says Ann Friedman. 'I don't know who's curating my news.'**

enough to get the news sifted and summarized once per week; now, with news sites churning out stories every few minutes, a daily email recap serves a similar function.

In this era of customization, the aggregating and summarizing functions are now being divided into specialized demographic markets, such as the 22- to 34-year-old upscale women targeted by theSkimm, a daily email newsletter founded last year by Carly Zakin, 27, and Danielle Weisberg, 26, who met while working at NBC. TheSkimm's online sign-up page says it "simplifies the headlines for the educated professional who knows enough to know she needs more." The Skimm uses cut-to-the-chase phrases but introduces topics playfully: A hostage-taking by militants in Algeria was teased as "A Really Bad Argo Sequel."

"We saw our friends weren't getting served by traditional media," says Zakin. "An email newsletter made the most sense...to make it part of the daily routine. I wake up, roll over, and look at my email."

While many general-interest sites say that email subscriptions form an important part of their readership base, email aggregation can also serve a knowledgeable, insider audience with specialized information. This form was popularized by Mike Allen, Politico's star reporter, who in 2007 launched the site's Playbook, his morning blast of urgent political news and analysis. Playbook excerpts a smattering of the top political stories, interspersed with in-crowd gossip, such as birthday wishes to the politicians, lobbyists, and journalists who both read Playbook and are covered by it. Reading Playbook daily has become such a staple of the Beltway insider's media diet that *The New York Times Magazine* titled its April 2010 cover profile of Allen "The Man the White House Wakes Up To."

Even within the political realm, though, there is room for variation. Ezra Klein, 28, started Wonkblog, a policy-oriented blog at *The Washington Post*, in 2009. The next year he decided to add an email roundup, called Wonkbook, which follows the same basic template as Playbook but focuses on policy rather than horse-race politics. It has grown to more than 40,000 subscribers. Wonkbook content is also posted as an item on the blog, where it receives tens of thousands more pageviews every day. "We're seeing a move from media you seek out to media that comes to you," says Klein, "because you opted into it in some form."

The strength of newsletters is a bit counterintuitive, since email is declining in importance relative to synchronous means of communication such as instant messaging. Today's teenagers are constantly IMing, texting, and using social networks, rather than checking their email. But once they get to college or get a desk job, they find themselves using email all day. It is still the primary means of distributing information within limited networks such as companies or universities.

The rise of the smartphone has also given new life to email as a means of distributing journalism. "Newsletters are one of the projects that I will spend the most time on in the next few months," says Nico Pitney, 31, head of product at The Huffington Post. Just as young digital natives demand, newsletters deliver content to them instead of expecting them to seek it out. The Atlantic Wire's daily Five Best Columns "has pretty high open rates and a pretty devoted audience," says Gabriel Snyder. "There are people who spend all day in meetings, and the way they catch up on news is an email newsletter."

#### They consume news on an array of devices

Digital publications have seen their share of traffic from mobile devices and social media increase dramatically in recent years. And so they are redesigning their sites and content to maximize the experience for those readers and the value of those readers to the publication.

Designing for mobile devices means building in flexibility. Mashable, a well-read site covering technology news, used to get 70 percent of its visitors via search engines; now, traffic is evenly split among search, social, and direct traffic. "We overhauled the front end and homepage to be optimized for mobile," says Adam Ostrow, 30, Mashable's chief strategy officer. "You get a one-column view on a phone, two columns on a tablet, and three on a computer. We now have more line breaks and not very long paragraphs; we introduced pullquotes. We're generally trying to break up the story and make it more digestible."

If you are launching a site today, you engineer it from the beginning to be easily read on mobile devices. That's the approach taken by Quartz. "What we built works across a variety of devices, including your laptop or regular old computer," explains Seward. "Depending on what device you visit us on, we try to display an appropriate layout for you."

Meanwhile, media entrepreneurs are devising new news products specifically for the smartphone. Circa, an iPhone app, launched in October; by February, it had seen hundreds of thousands of downloads. Instead of excerpting reported

articles, Circa's journalists compile new pieces that simply cite the originals as sources. The app is essentially a series of bullet points on the 20 or so biggest news stories of the day.

"We're just trying to inform," says Matt Galligan, Circa's cofounder and CEO. "We're looking for long-term user trust. I think even young people do still care about brands." Circa's largest demographic, accounting for about one-third of its users, is the group aged 25 to 34. Thirteen-to-24-year-olds are about one-quarter of the Circa audience.

Circa's user interface has its advantages: Sliding from one point to the next, often with relevant art, makes the most of the iPhone in a way that text emails do not. The problem with Circa is its business-side implications. Unlike

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Longform reading on a tiny screen? You bet. 'Almost a quarter of our traffic is on the iPhone,' says Max Linsky.

other aggregators, Circa is simply condensing information on a major story from several sources, not just grabbing one story in particular—so those who are paying for the original reporting are not making money from it. Summarizing for smartphones has suddenly become big business: In March, Yahoo raised eyebrows with its purchase of Summly (for a reported \$30 million), acquiring both a text-condensing algorithm and the services of its 17-year-old founder.

One might assume that a phone, with its small screen, would lend itself only to reading short items. But young readers are willing to consume longer features on their phones as well, often in several chunks throughout the day. "We've seen really surprising numbers—almost a quarter of all our traffic is on the iPhone," says Max Linsky, 32, founder of Longform.org, an aggregator of in-depth magazine pieces.

While nearly half of American adults own a smartphone, nearly a third own a tablet computer. A majority of all these people say they use the devices to get news. In September 2012, Pew found that 67 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds had a smartphone, versus 46 percent of all American adults. Young people spend more time on mobile phones or tablet devices than their elders, and are more likely to browse the Web and get their news via social-media platforms. A June 2012 Pew study found that 19 percent of American adults of all ages saw news or news headlines on a social network the day before being interviewed, up from just 9 percent in 2010. In the same survey, Pew reported that 34 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds said they had seen news on a social-networking site the previous day, compared with 12 percent in 2010.

Browsing the Web by typing URLs into a browser is a less-than-enjoyable experience when using a handheld device without a keyboard. So mobile-device users gravitate toward

products that let them simply scroll with their thumbs and click on links. The September 2012 Pew study revealed that 47 percent of smartphone users and 39 percent of tablet users said they got news through a social network "sometimes" or "regularly." In fact, that Pew study states, "Major news websites in the US now get, on average, 9 percent of their traffic from Facebook, more than double the 4 percent seen just 15 months ago."

### They're crazy about video

Some folks might think of YouTube, which is owned by Google, as a repository for silly homemade videos and illegally posted songs, but it is increasingly a source of news. One-third of YouTube searches are for news-related terms, according to the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism (2011), and 51 percent of the most-watched videos bore a news organization's logo. According to YouTube itself, 7,000 hours of news-related video are uploaded to the site every day. And the site's overall usage numbers are extraordinary: More than 1 billion unique visitors per month watch 4 billion hours of video (the site does not release audience statistics segmented by age). What's more, the eight-year-old site is still growing: Pageviews are up 25 percent since the beginning of 2012.

As with photos, a "wow" factor is the single biggest driver of video popularity. In 2011, for example, the most-watched YouTube clip featured dramatic footage of the Japanese earthquake and resulting tsunami. Sometimes, of course, what goes viral is too good to be true: As *The New York Times* recently reported, a September 19 YouTube clip about a pig helping a baby goat out of a pond was actually staged as a promotion for a new Comedy Central show. (Before the fakery was exposed, the clip had been promoted by *Time* magazine's Twitter feed and several network news shows.)

Like text-based media companies, YouTube is in the process of transforming itself from user-requested "pull" mode to "push." "The noun of yesterday on YouTube was *video*, and the noun of the future is *channels*," says Tom Sly, director of content partnerships for news and education at YouTube. "We want people to actually come and subscribe to channels—to say, 'I want to know the latest and greatest from *Vice*.'" Thus YouTube itself becomes a news source. Whereas before you had to know what news you were looking for, now you can subscribe to the BBC's channel and see all of the BBC's videos posted in reverse chronological order when you log in. Ultimately, YouTube hopes to use an algorithm that will note that, say, you watch BBC videos on the Middle East but not on soccer, and use that knowledge to refine your version of the channel, reordering the videos accordingly.

If phones seem like lousy formats for reading long magazine articles, they are even less obviously conducive to watching TV. In the age of 60-inch high-definition television, who wants to squint at a screen so small it can fit in your hand? But people are beginning to do just that, and as tablets and phones move toward a point of convergence in size and functionality, mobile will make up an increasing portion of video views.

In November 2012, Huffington Post cofounder Ken Lerer

## Hard Numbers

From the Pew Research Center 2013 State of the News Media

**72**

percent of all US adults who say the most common way they hear about news from family and friends is through "word of mouth"

**23**

percent of 18-to-29-year-olds who say they primarily get news from family and friends via social media

**43**

percent of tablet users who say they are consuming more news since getting a tablet

**60**

percent of people under age 50 who say they got news from a mobile device "yesterday"

**60**

percent of US adults who say they have heard "nothing" or "very little" about the financial problems besetting newsrooms

**31**

percent of US adults who say they have abandoned a news outlet because it no longer provides the news and information they expect

**80**

percent growth of mobile-ad spending in 2012

**64**

percent of total digital-ad spending pocketed by Google, Yahoo, Facebook, Microsoft, and AOL

**7**

percent of total digital-ad spending going to mobile ads

**54.5**

percent of mobile-ad spending pocketed by Google

**450**

US dailies that have implemented, or this year plan to implement, a metered paywall

(a member of CJR's Board of Overseers) launched a new digital video product called NowThis News, on the premise that young people would watch short news clips on their phones. "Younger people don't dislike video; it's just never been in their life to run home to watch the evening news," says Drake Martinet, 29, the company's social-media editor. NowThis News produces videos featuring condensed highlights of major stories; a typical entry is the 80-second video "KnowThis: Why Hugo Chavez's Death Matters." Rather than doing original reporting, it's trying for clever packaging: For example, Martinet says, NowThis recently recut widely available NASA space-station footage in the style of *MTV Cribs*.

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**'The training in journalism school is to remove yourself from the story,' says Sterling Proffer of Vice. 'We don't.'**

The shift toward online consumption been slower for the television-news industry than for print, but among young people it is catching up. A September 2012 report Pew found that "among adults younger than age 30, as many saw news on a social networking site the previous day (33 percent) as saw any television news (34 percent)." That is a substantial drop in TV news viewership among under-30s from 2006, when Pew found 49 percent of them watched TV news.

"If you're doing investigative journalism and the purpose is to have influence, digital is the tip of the sword," says Andrew Golis, 29, *Frontline*'s director of digital media. For a scoop to ripple outward, it has to be linked and shared in social media, so *Frontline* works every angle, before and even after the airdate. Source agnosticism, he argues, is limited to short, immediate news. It's one thing to click on a link of unknown provenance to read 200 words or watch a quick video; it's another to commit to an hourlong documentary or a 10,000-word article. "When I see on my Twitter feed that the House voted for Hurricane Sandy relief, I'd be willing to read that from a million different sources," says Golis. "When it comes to longform storytelling, you're investing [time] in a serious thing, and you don't do that without some confidence. Either someone has told you it's good, or you trust the brand."

Vice, too, produces original longform video, albeit with a very different attitude. Its crews go out and shoot documentaries like no one else's—most recently, the brand scored a world exclusive with basketball star Dennis Rodman's visit to North Korea. HBO has contracted Vice to do a 30-minute weekly show that debuted in April. The first episode featured trips to report on political violence in the Philippines and child suicide bombers in Afghanistan.

A descendant of the *Voice of Montreal*, which was founded in 1994, *Vice* is now a free monthly magazine with a circulation of 1.2 million; its website has almost 10 million monthly unique visitors. *Vice* does not have a sweatshop of aggregators churning out summaries of other people's reporting; it finds original stories and puts a distinctive spin on them (a classic example: "Heavy Metal in Baghdad," a 2007 documentary about an Iraqi band that also, of course, explored the Iraq War).

*Vice* is the modern Web's answer to a subversive alt-weekly tabloid, housed in a converted warehouse in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. "We have hundreds of young people here, telling stories in their own voice," says Sterling Proffer, *Vice*'s director of platform. "The training in journalism school is to remove yourself from the story. We don't."

Another new video brand that has found serious traction is The Young Turks (TYT), which calls itself "the largest online news show in the world" and now logs 30 million page views per month. Begun as a Sirius Satellite Radio show in 2002, TYT has since branched out beyond politics and economics to produce shows on everything from film to sports. The presentation is energetic and irreverent. As founder and host Cenk Uygur says, "You know what, old media? We're comin' for ya."

#### **They rarely visit your homepage**

Early on, websites were designed like print publications, with homepages serving as a front page or table of contents, and individual articles, as in a magazine or newspaper, offering little besides the piece itself and a few links to related content (often chosen by a software algorithm). Today, a reader usually arrives at an article page through a link to a particular item, as if opening a newspaper to the fourth page of Section 3.

"At both Huffington Post and Reuters, the majority of traffic comes through at the article level or content-piece level," says Thomson-Reuters's Alex Leo. "That's a huge shift. The older you get in the spectrum, the more people go to a homepage or topic page. Young people are more source-agnostic."

Erica Berger, 26, until recently product partnership director at Storyful, a wire service for social media, has the same view of the generational divide. "I hate homepages," she says, adding that "millennials are thinking about content according to topic" rather than provider. "I want to read about the [presidential] inauguration from six or seven publications, and I want see what my friends are saying on Twitter and pictures people are taking on Instagram. I'm not just reading highly credentialed journalists; I'm also reading snarky commentary and regular people who were on the ground somewhere."

Social-media users just click on whatever interests them. "If you're talking about how normal [young] people are consuming news, it's mostly links they see on social networks: Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr," says Benjamin Jackson, 31, who worked on developing iPad and iPhone apps for *The New York Times*. "It is what we in computing nerdspeak call a 'breadth-first search' rather than 'depth-first search.' You cast a wide net and take out the best fish."

## Old news

The journalism business has evolving for years, if not quite as cataclysmically as it is now. **Ben Adler** is a 31-year-old freelance writer; his father, **Jerry Adler**, 63, had a long, distinguished career at *Newsweek*. Here are highlights of a recent Gchat about their media consumption.

**Ben** Tell me about your media diet when you were young.

**Jerry** As a kid, I read the newspapers that my father brought home: *The New York Times* and his evening papers of choice, the *World-Telegram* and the *New York Post*. There were seven papers in New York back then, segmented somewhat by class, politics, and religion. *The Times* was the more liberal morning broadsheet, compared to the *Herald-Tribune*, which was the moderate Republican paper. *The Daily News* and the *Mirror* were the morning tabloids, pretty much the voices of right-wing Irish Catholicism. *The Post*—ironically, in light of what it has become—was the liberal, Jewish working-class afternoon paper. I loved those papers. The columnist Murray Kempton was my hero, as a writer. A Sunday *New York Times* in those years was immense.

**Ben** Was that because of the ad pages or because of more content?

**Jerry** Both, but probably more to do with the ads. There were pages and pages of classified real-estate ads, and a thick “Help Wanted” section. When I looked for a job in journalism after college, I found one by answering an ad in the *Times*. (I believe the category was called “Help Wanted—College Graduates,” although it could have been “Help Wanted—Male.”) I listened to the radio, I guess, and watched the network news broadcasts, which sometime in the '60s, I believe, went from 15 minutes to half an hour.

**Ben** By the time you became a journalist there were only three papers in New York City, right? Had anything else changed?

**Jerry** I listened to the radio more. All-news radio [which caught on during the 1962–63 newspaper strike] was the start of the 24-hour news cycle, as far as I was concerned.

**Ben** So how do you get your news now?

**Jerry** I still get the *Times* delivered every day, but it's the only print newspaper I read with any regularity. I'm at the computer most of the day, and I check a handful of sites frequently—either because there's a story I want to follow, or just because there's no water fountain at home to walk to. For breaking news, I go to CNN or the *Times* or (for local stories) NY1. I like TPM, *New York's "Intelligencer,"* and *Slate* for analysis. I don't use Twitter very much, although I've been told I should. A fair amount of stuff comes to me through links posted on Facebook.



**Ben** You still listen to the radio when you shave in the morning, like you did when I was a kid?

**Jerry** Yeah, CBS. Although Charles Osgood has turned into a right-wing crank.

**Ben** I remember how a West Coast sports score wouldn't be in the *Times*. But you used to get the results on the radio and tell me.

**Jerry** Well, call me when you wake up and I'll still tell you.

**Ben** Nowadays, when I wake up, I can just look at my phone and find out.

**Jerry** Really? Your phone can do that? Just kidding. I know it can.

**Ben** I guess part of what *Newsweek* had all those bureaus for was just to have someone reading that town's paper and watching/listening to its local newscasts?

**Jerry** The editors went back and forth over the years on whether they actually cared about this stuff. In general, they felt like it ought to be good for the magazine...but then, faced with the reality of running a four-column story on a scandal in the Houston school system or whatever...they'd punt.

**Ben** You mentioned checking websites because there's no water cooler to walk to, now that you work from home. I remember you used to pace all the time when you were writing. Do you think that the Internet has made it harder to focus on reporting and writing without getting distracted?

**Jerry** For writers, as for shortstops, the legs go first. Look, the Internet has made

my job as a writer immensely easier in countless ways. It more than makes up for the marginal increase in time-wasting it facilitates. I'm working now on a story for *Smithsonian* about human evolution, and I needed a scientific paper from 1995, and I found it in under a minute. It cost me \$8, admittedly, but I was happy to pay it. At *Newsweek*, I could have had a research librarian track it down, which might have taken two days. Working from home, 20 years ago, I would have had to find it in a library, which would have taken half the day.

**Ben** Do you worry that interactive technology means young journalists will learn to game systems, from search engine optimization to getting attention on Twitter, instead of learning how to become better reporters?

**Jerry** I was speaking to a college journalist at The New School recently who said the preferred strategy for his generation is to stay up late on Twitter and retweet comments from [established] journalists, hoping to catch someone's attention that way. This guy applied for a job with a prestigious online news outlet and was told, “You have great clips, but we're looking for people who know how to run a website—and if they need to learn journalism, we'll teach it to them.”

**Ben** How much do you consume news on your phone? You have an iPhone, right?

**Jerry** I have an Android phone. As a subscriber, I get emailed news alerts from the *Times* when a story breaks. Not, actually, when it breaks—half an hour to an hour later, but that's good enough for me.

### They expect a conversation

Legacy media outlets can reach young audiences by pushing their content out through the mobile applications and social-media platforms. It's the digital equivalent of what newspapers have always done: delivering the product daily right to your doorstep, giving that paper away for less than the cost of printing and distributing it, and also making sure they're on every newsstand in town.

But the next step is something newspapers have traditionally not done: treating readers and viewers as partners in a conversation. That can mean fostering dialogue with readers in comment sections; through Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr accounts; or even giving some reader-gener-

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'The conventional media approach is one-way,' says Mark Coatney, but now brands 'interact with the audience as equals.'

ated content special visibility. *The Wall Street Journal* invites readers to participate in live video chats on its website, as does HuffPost Live, which airs 12 hours per day, five days a week, and then repeats. "The conventional media approach is, 'We do our thing, and you consume it—it's one-way,'" says Mark Coatney, who launched *Newsweek*'s highly regarded Tumblr account when he was a Web editor there in 2008. "Effective media organizations on Tumblr interact with the audience as equals."

This new form of engagement can pose some challenges. On *Newsweek*'s Tumblr site, Coatney cultivated a punchy, irreverent tone and often discussed controversies swirling around *Newsweek* itself, such as the news that the magazine had been put up for sale. That kind of personal, informal voice might clash with the sensibilities of a straitlaced newspaper, wire service, or network news program. And most reporters are already scrambling to meet the escalating demands of the Internet and the 24/7 news cycle, so they have little time to interact with readers.

Indeed, media organizations are now willing to let the audience help cover the news (look at CNN's iReport). Amateur uploads may be the best—or, indeed, the only—content available in a crisis such as the 2009 protests in Iran. Twitter and Instagram users have also proven themselves vigilant when it comes to identifying frauds and hoaxes. Berger says that at *The Economist*, where she previously worked, video from the 2012 campaign trail was contributed by civilians "in every state who were tweeting on the ground."

With all of the user-generated content floating around the Internet, it's not surprising that something like Storyful

emerged to organize it. News outlets subscribe to the service, which combs the Web (typically trawling through Twitter and other social-media platforms) to find the best video, photos, and written content produced by average users. Storyful then relies on a team of journalists to verify each item's accuracy, and pass the vetted material along to its subscribers for reuse. "NBC News calls every night asking for the best content to put up tomorrow," says Berger.

### They like to anoint new brands

If there is one website that epitomizes the general-interest newspaper in the era of social media, it is BuzzFeed. Almost 60 percent of its readers are between the ages of 18 and 34—easily the highest proportion of any major general-interest news site. More than 40 percent of the traffic comes through mobile devices, and the majority of that is through social-media apps such as Facebook's. "Sharing is our main goal and quality metric," says Jonah Peretti, referring to those times when an item gets posted or linked to on social media by a BuzzFeed reader.

Visiting the New York office of the rapidly expanding company is like watching a cartoon of new media at work. The publication's headquarters, tucked into a nondescript Chelsea building, seem like a metaphor for the Web itself: casual, transparent, and non-hierarchical. There are massive windows showcasing impressive views of midtown Manhattan, and large communal workspaces that—in the manner of online publications—lack the loud banter of newsrooms. Reporting and discussions among the overwhelmingly young staff are more likely to take place over email and IM apps than face-to-face or on the phone.

Peretti sits in a glass-walled office in the middle of the floor. After Huffington Post was sold to AOL in 2011, Peretti left to focus on BuzzFeed's expansion into original reporting. And just as HuffPost's mastery of search-engine optimization defined media wizardry a few years ago, BuzzFeed defines it today.

"When we launched, we didn't have verticals around traditional content categories," Peretti explains. "We organized the site around the emotions that lead to sharing. If a football player does a funny touchdown dance, you share the video because it is funny, not because it is sports."

Search engines are still a major driver of traffic. In fact, according to Pew, search remains the second-largest source of website traffic coming from the population as a whole, trailing behind direct visits to homepages and far ahead of social media. "Nobody sees what you search for," notes Peretti, so it's the best way to find anything that's "less socially acceptable"—anything relating to sex, for example, or one's medical ailments.

Peretti, of course, is a big believer in the salutary effects of social media on journalism. Writing for search engines led to notoriously gimmicky and unilluminating pieces such as HuffPost's infamous 2011 "What Time Does the Superbowl Start," an empty page designed to capitalize on people searching for the Super Bowl's kickoff time (and yes, the title of the event was intentionally styled incorrectly to catch more search traffic). But people share only what they think

## Cause and effect

DoSomething.org's surveys of teens suggest that the voters of tomorrow do actually care about current affairs

Who says kids are apathetic and don't care about the news? Well, kids do—but their behavior suggests otherwise. A 2012 TBWA Worldwide survey found that 56 percent of all young adults described themselves as "activists." Last year in the US, 2.4 million teens participated in campaigns organized by DoSomething.org, and 7,000 new kids sign up every day. The organization

communicates largely by text with its kids (who overindex for minorities, versus the general population). In a survey about gun policy and school safety, posted online from mid-February to mid-March, more than 2,500 teens aged 12 to 25 weighed in, with the majority in favor of making gun regulation stricter. Previous campaigns have focused on teen pregnancy,

homelessness, and poverty. Asked how and where they get their news, those surveyed responded that their top two everyday sources were Internet news sites (43 percent) and social media (46 percent). Indeed, DoSomething uses Facebook authentication to verify the survey takers' identity and demographic details (but they're shared only in aggregate, of course).

## Where do millennials get their news? And how often?

	Every day	Several times a week	Occasionally	Never
TV	27.2%	27.2%	36.4%	9.2%
Newspapers	5.3%	19.3%	53.4%	22.1%
The radio	19.0%	27.4%	37.6%	16.0%
Internet news sites	42.9%	31.5%	21.7%	4.0%
Social media	46.1%	27.9%	18.2%	7.8%
From teachers in the classroom	8.3%	37.8%	42.9%	11.0%
From your parents	22.5%	34.2%	33.5%	9.8%
From your friends	19.7%	32.9%	39.8%	7.6%

is worth looking at. Say what you will about pictures of cats overlaid with ungrammatical phrases—but at least they go viral because Internet users actually find them funny.

The emphasis on sharing may result in even more soft, feel-good material. As the *Times* reported in May, "By scanning people's brains and tracking their emails and online posts, neuroscientists and psychologists have found that good news can spread faster and farther than disasters and sob stories." Jonah Berger, a social psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania, told the *Times*: "When you share a story with your friends and peers, you care a lot more how they react. You don't want them to think of you as a Debbie Downer."

Advertisers want to avoid that, too. "Whenever I hear from ad sales, it's, 'I want to be around positive news,' and most news isn't positive," says Alex Leo. "That's why we've seen *The New York Times* Style section expand to two days a week, and so much more health content and blogs about parenting. It's the same with HuffPo."

## What might they want next?

Some analysts believe that young people are no less trusting of high-quality news brands than were previous generations. "Mistrust is not necessarily any stronger than it used to be, when you adjust for life stage," argues danah boyd, 35, a senior researcher at Microsoft Research (her formal name is lowercase). "Adults have a different level of trust than teenagers." Baby Boomers, too, were suspicious of mainstream media when they were younger (remember Abbie Hoffman's famous admonition not to trust anyone over 30?). As they mature, today's teenagers may develop trust for certain news sources, but perhaps not the ones their parents favored.

*The New York Times*, hoping to remain one of those brands, is already targeting the next generation. In February, the newspaper revealed that it is prototyping a pared-down digital subscription offering—with less content and at a lower price point—intended to appeal to teens and twentysomethings.

Participant Media, an Oscar-winning film and documentary production company, plans to launch a millennial-oriented cable network, called Pivot, this summer. Evan Shapiro, president of Participant Media Television, says its programs "will be more about conversation and less about one person speaking from a pulpit, giving their opinion." He cites the shows of MSNBC's Christopher Hayes and Melissa Harris-Perry as models of respectful discourse, featuring a range of panelists sparring with wit rather than belligerence. "The shows that millennials look to usually have a point of view, with a bent they are interested in, like *The Daily Show* and *Colbert*. They are interested in politics, but not partisan bickering." Alas, the first program announced is a gimmicky-sounding show described by its host, the notably unwitty pundit Meghan McCain, as a "cross between *Meet the Press* and *Jackass*."

*The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* are frequently cited as popular news sources by teenagers and preteens, according to Alan Miller, president and CEO of the News Literacy Project, which works to teach middle-school and high-school students how to approach the vast array of news sources they encounter. He warns that snippets of information or video are often posted online and linked by blogs and shared on social media, without relevant context. Miller cites the cautionary tale of Shirley Sherrod, the Department

of Agriculture official who was forced to resign after conservative commentator Andrew Breitbart posted misleading video showing selective portions of what she said in a speech. "Getting information from so many sources underscores the need for skepticism," Miller says, "especially because there is a tendency to believe things that come from friends, and that is especially true among young people."

#### A new level of engagement

Eli Pariser, 32 and a former executive director of MoveOn.org, last year launched Upworthy, a site aimed at fostering the spread of content it considers important. "Upworthy is an effort to ensure that people getting their news through

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Eli Pariser looks for 'shareable bits of content that can compete with the cat photos that fill up people's news feeds.'

social feeds see content about the topics that really matter," explains Pariser. "The New York Times often promotes articles on the front page that, if you look at the Web metrics, do very poorly. Articles about Afghanistan get very low social traffic—they get hundreds of shares, compared with thousands for other topics—but the editors make a decision that people need to know about a war in a foreign country. As we move into the Twitter and Facebook era, how do you make sure people stay on top of topics like that?"

The answer, Pariser believes, is to showcase essential aspects of important stories: "It's about finding shareable bits of content and dressing them up with great headlines and page design so they can compete with the cat photos that fill up people's news feeds," he says. "There's a chart about media consolidation—when you got people to look at it, they got really interested and wanted to share it. But it's hard to get people to care about media consolidation. The hook of the headline was 'The Real Reason They Still Play "Mrs. Robinson" on the Radio.' Eighty percent of stations have the same playlists across the country, because they are owned by the same company. Several hundred thousand people came to check out that chart. But if you had a headline that said, 'Here's a Chart about Media Consolidation in America,' obviously it wouldn't do as well."

For young people who are already interested in an issue and want to address it, there are websites that plug right into social-media platforms. On Change.org, "someone starts a petition, and they're asked who in their networks they want to share it with," says Matt Slutsky, 32, the site's managing director of business development. A recent Change.org petition asking the Boy Scouts to accept gay members got 1.4

million signatures and was covered by major media outlets such as CBS News.

In his 2012 book *The Filter Bubble*, Pariser frets that personalized information streams allow people to avoid contrary opinions, inconvenient facts, or simply boring but important news, a tendency that Miller of the News Literacy Project says is especially prevalent among the young. Personalized streams can also prevent the accidental discovery of new items of interest that one gets from a well-edited publication or program. But Ethan Zuckerman, director of the MIT Center for Civic Media, predicts that social media will find a way to fix that. "We've gone from a model that was good at discovery and bad at customization to one that is highly customizable," he says. "The next step will be to find new ways of serendipity. It will involve some combination of returning to curators, but in a very different form."

Zuckerman points to Maria Popova, who runs the blog Brain Pickings, as an example of a modern curator. Brain Pickings collects items of "interestingness," over a range of creative fields from science to literature. Twitter does have an algorithm for identifying the kinds of people and outlets you follow and then suggesting similar ones, notes Zuckerman, so why can't Twitter take the same information and offer material on subjects you would otherwise never see?

#### What might they pay for?

Conventional wisdom has long held that once young people become accustomed to getting something for free online, they will refuse ever to pay for it. But the historical evidence—from the launch of Apple's iTunes service 10 years ago to *The New York Times* digital paywall—is more ambiguous. Certainly more sources of original reporting are grappling with their own finances: In March, *The Washington Post* announced it would be joining *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* in erecting a paywall. "People don't think twice about paying for cable or satellite television," says Zuckerman. "We went from TV being absolutely free to paying for it. It's possible mobile phone providers will create subscription products for young consumers."

Young people may be willing to pay for once-free media if they care about it enough. Recently, Rob Thomas raised money from fans on Kickstarter to produce a movie based on his *Veronica Mars* series. Perhaps the same approach could be applied to news. "If Joss Whedon decides he wants to make a movie without studios, he can go right to his fans," says boyd, referring to the producer-director and Comic-Con favorite. "So suppose [New York Times reporter] David Carr wants to do a story with high reporting costs. Can he fan-fund it?"

She answers her own question with a sweeping assessment: "All roles are being disrupted—including the role of the audience." **CJR**

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BEN ADLER is a freelance journalist covering politics, urban issues, and media. He has been a reporter for Politico, Newsweek, and The Nation, and his writing has appeared in The Atlantic, New York, and The Economist, among other publications. Many thanks to the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation—and especially to Kathy Im, director of the Media Program—for underwriting the reporting of this piece.

# ‘See you on the other side’

Meet Jessica Lum, a terminally ill 25-year-old who chose to spend what little time she had practicing journalism

BY SARA MORRISON

**O**n September 22, 2012, Jessica Ann Lum took the stage to accept her award for Best Feature in the student-journalist category from the Online News Association. As the lights in the San Francisco Hyatt Regency’s Grand Ballroom glinted off the silver sequins on her shirt, Jessica gave a “brief and SEO-friendly” acceptance speech, as host Hari Sreenivasan, the *PBS NewsHour* correspondent, had requested.

Jessica hadn’t expected to win. The other finalists were teams of students, and she worked solo on her “Slab City Stories” project—a multimedia report on the inhabitants of a former Marine base-turned-squatter-RV-park in the California desert (though not, she made sure to point out, without the support of her professors, classmates, and Kickstarter backers). Jessica didn’t enjoy being in the spotlight, either; she was more comfortable behind the camera than in front of it. It took her only a few seconds longer to accept the award than it did to get to the stage. After a rush of thank-yous and a celebratory double fist-pump, Jessica returned to her seat—and to what appeared to be a bright future, one in which she’d tell many more stories and win many more awards.

Less than four months later, on January 13, 2013, Jessica died. She was 25.

As a college senior, she’d already decided that she was going to be a journalist who told people’s stories honestly and powerfully, using words, photos, videos, and design; and that nothing—not the recession, the bleak journalism job market, nor the rare, incurable cancer with which she’d just been diagnosed—would stop her. According to her family, friends, professors, classmates, and colleagues, Jessica was that determined and that talented—and she was right. Jessica’s tragically brief journalism career is significant not only because of the substantive work she produced, but because of how she did it: firmly rooted in the fundamentals of reporting and storytelling, but with a vision and style that incorporated today’s digital tools. She was, in many ways,

the future of journalism. Jessica loved to tell people’s stories. This is hers.

JESSICA’S OWN TROPHY—A CLEAR ACRYLIC PYRAMID—SITS on a mantel in her parents’ house in Sacramento’s South Land Park neighborhood. This is where Jessica and her older sister, Bethany, grew up, and where her parents, Bob, a retired high-school physics teacher, and Anna, who works for the state as an analyst, still live with their dog, Dakota. Dakota is a recent addition to the family; Anna relented on her no-dogs rule when she realized this was Jessica’s only chance to have one. She asked only that the dog Jessica brought home from the Sacramento SPCA not be big or black. Dakota is a black German Shepherd mix. “This is the one she fell in love with,” Anna says with a laugh.

From an early age, Jessica displayed many of the traits that would define her journalism: curious, adventurous, intelligent, determined, fearless, compassionate. As a newborn, she surprised nurses by grabbing onto the side of her bassinet and trying to pull herself up. The Lums would see this determination countless times thereafter. “If she wants to latch onto something, she’ll stay there,” Bob says.

Growing up, Jessica was a tomboy who preferred Transformers to dolls; this made fitting in with other children difficult at times. By junior high, she’d found her way socially, though she always had a soft spot for outsiders—from homeless people, to whom she would occasionally give her lunch (and the Tupperware it was packed in), to a lonely new student from Taiwan who became a lifelong friend.

She stood 5’4.5” and typically wore T-shirts and jeans. She loved to snowboard and was a self-described “huge nerd,” with Dragon Ball Z posters on the walls of a room that looked more like a 10-year-old boy’s lair than a teenage girl’s. She played video games and ate Korean BBQ, usually with her fiancé, Chris Tanouye.

Although she was a voracious reader, she was not really a



**Her time** Jessica Lum was a journalist for the new century, an empathetic reporter who told timeless stories with digital-age tools.

news junkie. Her father, though, could sometimes convince her to watch the news with him. *PBS NewsHour* was a family favorite, and when Jessica recognized one of its regular commentators on a San Francisco street, she had her picture taken with him. The photo, now framed, shows a smiling teenager next to a happy—if a bit surprised—Mark Shields.

Her high school had links to prominent journalists—it was named after C. K. McClatchy, and Joan Didion (who would later become one of Jessica's favorite writers) is an alum—but it wasn't until her senior year that she got interested in journalism. Jessica enrolled in a photography class at a local community college, taking black-and-white pictures on a 35-millimeter Minolta X570 that was older than she was. Despite her inexperience, many of the photos she took then display characteristics of the more sophisticated shots she took later on: buildings at unconventional angles, an emphasis on symmetry and recurring patterns, evocative lighting. Her love of photography prompted her to join UCLA's campus paper, *The Daily Bruin*, soon after arriving for her freshman year.

Robert Faturechi, a colleague at the *Bruin*, recalls working with Jessica on stories, he as the reporter and she as the photographer. "She really wanted to get to know the people, the subjects, the topic—everything," says Faturechi, now a reporter at the *Los Angeles Times*.

In the summer of 2008, she and Faturechi won a traveling scholarship, and spent two weeks in Thailand reporting on the effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on children and sex

workers. Faturechi remembers Jessica's ability to connect with everyone, from Wik, an HIV-positive orphan, to Bill, an American she met on a long train ride who was very open about his fondness for Thai prostitutes. "I don't want to be judgmental, but he was a creepy guy," Faturechi says. "But Jess was not fazed by that." She would later write that the man made her "uneasy," but told her mother that she never saw her subjects as anything less than human beings to be greeted with an open mind and genuine interest.

The resulting series, published in *The Daily Bruin*, reflects the effort she put into that kind of reporting. Whether portraying Wik, nasal cannula in place and arms wrapped around an orphanage worker, or a rain-soaked alley that leads to the Classic Boys Club, the photos vividly evoke the locations and people they depict.

Jessica also wrote about how her perception of photography and journalism was shaped by the trip. "We often assume that a single photograph can encapsulate an entire life, a whole idea, or a whole person," she wrote. "And yet, as iconic as photographs can be, they often fail, just as words fail, to achieve such lofty goals... Words and images must work together in order to tell a whole story."

During the trip, Jessica mentioned to Faturechi that she felt tired and rundown. She didn't think much of it, as they were working long hours on little sleep in the hot Thai summer. But by the time the series was published in early December 2008, Jessica still felt sick; she had pain in her hip and back, and kept getting chest colds. She wondered if she'd

caught tuberculosis in Thailand. Her doctors were puzzled until she mentioned a “little bump” on her abdomen. Pheochromocytomas, tumors of the adrenal gland above the kidney, are rare, occurring in between two and eight people per million each year. Of those, only 10 percent are malignant.

On Christmas day, 2008, Jessica posted on her Facebook wall: “I have Cancer + 10 questions you might ask.”

**‘Mom, this disease, it’s gonna get me, so while I’m feeling well I want to pursue my dreams.’**

THE CANCER HAD ALREADY SPREAD TO HER BONES; HER HIP, she later wrote in *Giant Robot* magazine, “looks like a coral reef.” A picture of her tumor, that she insisted her surgeons take after they removed it, accompanied the article. It was a pink-and-white knot about the size of a grapefruit. Jessica described it as “freakishly mesmerizing.”

She left school a semester early, moved back home, and looked into treatment options. Without treatment, her doctor gave her two years. With it, he told her, “more than two years.” For once, that’s where Jessica’s curiosity stopped. “After that, she didn’t want to know how much time she had,” Anna says. “Even toward the end, she didn’t want to know. Although she knew. She knew it was close.”

There was oral chemo and three rounds of an experimental radiation therapy that required her to spend 29 days in a hospital isolation room, where she slept behind a lead shield. The radiation treatment was risky; some patients had died from it. But the gamble paid off, and the cancer stabilized. Jessica felt better and was ready to “resume plans that had been derailed.”

She started working again, as co-editor of the photography blog *PetaPixel* and photo editor at *Hyphen* magazine. And she applied to grad school. She was determined to be a journalist, and thought the skills and experience she’d gain there would be the best way to accomplish this. Her parents weren’t so sure. Anna encouraged her to stay in Sacramento, get an office job, and “focus on getting her health back.” Jessica responded, “Mom, this disease, it’s gonna get me anyway. And so while I’m feeling well I want to be able to live life. Be able to pursue my dreams. However long I can.”

She removed all references to her illness from the Internet. Jessica would later say this was for “professional reasons”—she was afraid employers wouldn’t hire someone who was sick—but she also chose not to tell her professors or classmates. She didn’t want pity or special treatment.

Jessica began at UC Berkeley’s Graduate School of Journalism in fall 2010. She was interviewed by one of her professors, Richard Koci Hernandez, as part of a video about the first weeks of school. She looks happy and healthy and energized. “What does journalism mean to you?” Koci asks.

Without hesitation, Jessica answers, “It means storytelling at its deepest level. At its most human level, I think, in a very real way.”

She thrived at Berkeley. Professors describe her as “pretty phenomenal,” “immediately terrific.” Classmate Hadley Robinson remembers her as a “social-media addict” who was “interested in how journalism is evolving,” what it would and could be. “I was impressed by her right away,” Robinson says.

Jessica enrolled in a class called “Digital TV and the World,” the description of which seemed tailor-made to her interests: “new styles of global reportage that take a close-up look at ordinary people and the issues they face.” That semester, the class focused on South Korea, and spent a month reporting from inside the country. Their work was published in a special section of *The Washington Post*’s website that Jessica designed and produced. Two of Jessica’s video reports are featured, including “The Return,” about a schizophrenic woman who makes weekly visits to the mental hospital where she was once committed to teach the patients who are still there.

The access Jessica got to the woman is testament to her ability to connect with people. “She actually went in and was filming in an institution,” recalled her classmate, Anne Brice. “That’s really hard to do, especially in Korea. It’s a very taboo subject.” The woman invited Jessica into her home, allowed her to film her brushing her teeth (one task the woman said her illness still made it difficult for her to do) and celebrating her 64th birthday. Jessica narrated the video: “It’s one more year she’s lived—on her own terms.”

As soon as she returned from South Korea, Jessica began an internship at the *LA Times*. By August, she was itching to escape LA for a while, and organized a road trip with some co-workers into the Colorado Desert in southeastern California. One stop was Slab City and its itinerant population, which typically shuns the outside world.

It was more than a hundred degrees when Jessica first got to Slab City; she didn’t stay long, but found herself wondering who lived in the RVs, and why they chose to stay in such inhospitable conditions. She returned in October, when it was cooler and many of the part-time residents had returned. “I just felt like this was a place that I could meet really fascinating people with great stories,” she later said.

Most “Slabbers,” as the people who live there are called, have become reluctant to talk to a media that often portrays them as “weirdos, hippies and drug addicts inhabiting the lawless patch of the California desert,” as a headline in UK’s *Daily Mail* put it. Jessica saw an opportunity to take a different approach.

To do this, she’d need to spend enough time with the Slabbers to earn their trust. Neil Mallick, an artist she would eventually profile, remembers first seeing Jessica around Halloween, “just hanging out,” with a camera at her side but no “reporter vibe,” as he put it. He saw her again in December, when she rented an RV and lived among the Slabbers for three weeks.

Mallick described Jessica’s reporting as an “anti-process.” More likely, her approachability and genuine interest in her subjects masked that process, which was just good beat

reporting. She frequented Slab City's Oasis Club ("where the old-timers go," Mallick says), drank coffee with them at the solar-powered Internet café, and attended community meetings. She ended up profiling a variety of people, whose lives she documented through photos, videos, and notecards she had each of them fill out. She filmed Karen Webb bathing nude in Slab City's hot springs, and Justin Davis, a 36-year-old reliving his lost teenage years in the skate park he built in an abandoned swimming pool. She photographed "Cuervo," "houseless on muleback for 15 years," and chronicled the 80th birthday party of Leonard Knight, the artist who created "Salvation Mountain," a 50-foot-high, cross-topped clay mountain that is Slab City's most prominent landmark.

When it was time to put the project together for the website she designed and coded herself ([www.slabcitystories.com](http://www.slabcitystories.com)), Jessica let the dynamic personalities shape the look and feel. Visually, it's minimal, with a simple grid of 16 boxes. Click on a box and a window pops up with more information. Sometimes it's just a picture and an index card, usually written by the subject himself—a design element that gives the digital page a real-world feel. In a few cases, there's a video. There's very little about Jessica herself, which her professor, Jeremy Rue, says was intentional. She also chose to headline the page with a simple sentence: "Squatters, Snowbirds and Wanderers of Southern California's Desert." People who come to the site, much like the people who come to Slab City, can explore and figure it out for themselves.

Jessica had learned that her cancer had returned in October 2011, just before she was scheduled to make her first reporting trip to Slab City. She went anyway. By her final semester, however, the disease was taking its toll. There were more frequent doctor's appointments, but she still didn't tell her classmates or professors what was wrong, alluding only to "health problems."

Jessica was determined to walk at graduation, though she was in so much pain she wasn't sure if she'd be able to. She did.

"She finished strong," Anna says.

"She finished strong," Bob repeats.

But Jessica wasn't finished. KPCC, a Southern California public-radio station, was expanding its multimedia team. Grant Slater, one of the station's visual journalists, came across Jessica's work and reached out to her. "I was really impressed by her roundness as a journalist," he says. "It's not often that you get somebody right out of grad school who can speak to all these mediums."

She moved to Los Angeles and began work—and more chemo. The treatment made her sick; she struggled to finish her first assignment. She drove herself to the emergency room, and a doctor there told her to go back to Sacramento.

About a week after she started at KPCC, she told her new co-workers that she had "health issues" and had to move back home. They wouldn't find out how serious it was until a few months later, in August, when Jessica started talking about her condition on Facebook again, with a post that shocked classmates and colleagues who weren't aware of her illness. "Friends, I am not doing well," she began. Her lungs were filling with fluid. Her heart had stopped; she was in the hospital when it happened, and was resuscitated.

But it was time, her doctor said, to go into hospice. Chris Tanouye, Jessica's first boyfriend whom she met during their freshman year at UCLA, proposed to her at her hospital bedside, according to the *Daily Bruin*. Anna describes him as "totally devoted" to Jessica, especially at the end. He declined to be interviewed.

Unusually, Jessica's condition improved for a short time, and she was able to go off of oxygen. She brought a tank with her to the ONA banquet—which she was determined to attend, of course—though she never needed it. Slater saw his former hire in the lobby, "radiant and beaming," but "I could tell she was not having the easiest time of it," he says. "Things happened really quickly after that."

In her final days, Jessica wrote that she was "looking forward to 2013, in spite of the guaranteed unknowns, thankful I can still say that." She watched series finales of her favorite sci-fi shows and took photos of dessert: "I am going to eat this small stack of Oreos, no regrets." Her mother read her a passage from Randy Alcorn's *Heaven*. Jessica asked her to read it again and again. In one of her final Facebook posts, she told her friends she felt "at peace. This life is not the only one to be lived. All good things...," and she signed off the same way she did in 2009, on her last post before she began isolation treatment: "See you on the other side."

IN GIANT ROBOT, JESSICA WROTE: "IT'S ONE THING TO SURVIVE, and another to live." It is another thing again to live on. Anna is thinking of writing a book; she's always liked writing, and Jessica left behind several empty journals and notebooks she might as well try to fill. Jessica left a copy of a favorite book, Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking*, on her dresser. Anna says she'd like to read it someday.

Jessica's sister, Bethany, moved to Africa with her husband and three children about a month after Jessica died. She took Jessica's Nikon D300s with her. Jessica always wanted to take pictures of African animals; Bethany plans to learn how to use it and take a few for her.

Maya Sugarman, one of Jessica's UCLA classmates, filled her job at KPCC. "She was always a role model to me," Sugarman says. "In a lot of ways, I feel this duty—and a lot of pressure, really—to make pictures that Jess never will be able to. They'll never be the same as the ones she could have made."

John Osborn, a year behind Jessica at Berkeley, is working on a news-related video game for his Master's project. There is a journalist character who looks a lot like Jessica.

Jessica's journalism will live on, too, as a record of a talented young reporter who could bridge old media and new, and in those who are inspired by her—journalists who can visualize and produce projects from beginning to end, from the first question to the last line of code. At the next graduation, UC Berkeley will name an award after her for work that shows excellence in visual journalism in a digital environment. Jessica, her mother says, was a "lifelong learner." We can learn a lot from her—from the work that she did, and from her drive to do it. **CJR**

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SARA MORRISON is an assistant editor at CJR. To see more of Jessica's work visit [CJR.org](http://CJR.org).

# The back page

A feature writer at the erstwhile *International Herald Tribune* remembers the glory days, when presses were on the premises and the paper left ink on your hands

BY JEFFREY ROBINSON

**T**hey're going to bury my newspaper.

The *International Herald Tribune* is dead.

Once upon a time, this wonderful, irreverent, and forever-iconic, six-days-a-week, Paris-based broadsheet was cherished by Americans in Europe. With the IHT, being away from home didn't mean being cut off from home. This fall, *The New York Times*, which owns the paper, is taking down the masthead and turning it into *The Global Edition of The New York Times*.

It doesn't make sense. If you want what the *Times* has to offer, you can have it on the Web. Why would anyone from Lubbock, Texas, who finds herself in Lubbock, Germany, care about *The New York Times*? There are already plenty of people in New York who don't care about it.

One of the last of the great journalistic legacies is soon to be a vacant lot.

Born as the *Paris Herald* in 1887, the paper was the love-child of the man who then owned the *New York Herald*, James Gordon Bennett Jr. The lunatic son of a legendary American newspaperman, Bennett headed for Europe after socially disgracing himself in New York and settled in Paris, which has always been a fine place to be the family's black sheep.

His timing was perfect. Wealthy Americans were flocking to Paris to buy art, to dress in the latest fashions, to eat the food, and to soak up the culture of a city they considered to be the most sophisticated in the world. While the British built London for the British, the French had built Paris for the world.

Some of us have never been able to get enough.

Seeing a niche, Bennett reinvented his New York paper in Europe to cater to the tastes of wealthy American travelers and expatriates. He stressed names and news, told stories you couldn't find anywhere else, brought Linotype and comic strips across the Atlantic, raced his early editions by Mercedes to the Channel so they could be sold quickly in England (he eventually flew them, making the IHT the first

truly international newspaper). He even highlighted sporting events on the front page.

He set a tone of impertinence that characterized the IHT for more than a century.

The paper, when I came to know it in the early 1970s, was housed in a grubby office block at 21 rue de Berri, just off the Champs-Élysées in the 8th Arrondissement. *Newsweek's* Paris bureau was on the third floor. The printing presses were in the basement.

To be honest, calling that building grubby doesn't come close. The paint on the walls had long ago flaked off. The building probably had an elevator—I'm almost sure there was one—but no one in their right mind would have trusted it. Not that the stairs were any better. None of the steps were parallel with the floor.

There was a horseshoe editors' desk, manned by old salts wearing shirt garters, none of whom could be bothered to hide their bottle of booze in some desk drawer. Drawers didn't close, anyway, because the wood was so warped with age. The furniture was mostly broken, all of the typewriters had seen better days, and the place stank of smoke—cigarette, cigar, and pipe.

The staff wasn't very big, and then not everybody was there all the time. If you couldn't find someone, the first place you checked was the bar across the street at the Hotel California.

The editor was a rough-and-ready character named Murray Weiss—everyone called him Buddy—who'd started there as a copyboy just after World War II, worked at every desk in the building, and ran the paper from 1966 to 1979 like Patton's army. Buddy liked writers, especially young writers, and he was always extremely nice to me. As I recall, his wife worked there too, which wasn't uncommon. Just about everybody seemed to be married to, or divorced from, or married again to, everybody else.

Although I was based in the south of France, one of the



**Bonjour, cherie, get me rewrite** On a good night, as deadline neared in the bullpen on the rue de Berri, an editor would bark, 'We need a back page. Half an hour.'

great treats of Paris was coming up to that office and mooching an impromptu invitation to dinner. The paper didn't go to bed until late, so food at 7:30 meant plenty of time afterward to get the paper out. On the best of those visits, someone would announce, "We need a back page," and someone else would say, "The kid's here," and I'd be directed to a half-broken desk with a mostly-broken, infinitely uncomfortable swivel chair and told, "Half an hour."

Everyone seemed to be shouting at the same time—well, mostly cursing at the same time—and deadlines were always too short. I vaguely recall a deadline bell. Manual typewriters clanked and phones rang. It was what a newspaper office is supposed to sound like.

Most of the time, once copy was handed in, I'd get ignored. I'd already been fed, I'd written, and there was no further use for me. But sometimes, on really good nights, someone would take me downstairs into the basement to watch the first edition roll off the press. They'd let me yank my own copy from

the conveyor belt and there it was: my story, still warm, like a fresh-baked baguette.

Best of all, there was ink on my hands.

Sadly, progress took its toll. When the *IHT* moved to Neuilly-sur-Seine, the old building was sold and the name on the front of it taken down.

Somehow the editors coped.

I never could.

The new office was open-plan, with a few private, glass-walled rooms along the side, and no booze anywhere to be seen. There might have been a news desk, I don't remember. Everyone was just someone else in just another cubicle. The place had the pall of an insurance office.

Not long after the move, I had an as-yet-unfiled story, which someone said they could use. But now the copy deadline was early, like 6 or 7—they were printing all over Europe and had to worry about the Far East edition, too—which meant no more lazy dinners. It also meant no more manual typewriters. Someone sat me down in front of a word processor for the very first time, and I hated it.

When I finally finished, instead of carrying the copy to a desk, and getting a grunt from some guy with gin breath, I merely pushed a button. And that was that. I never saw the story again until it appeared on the back page the following morning.

It just didn't feel right.

There was no ink.

There were, however, still some great characters. Mike Zwerin knew more about jazz than just about anyone in Europe. And Hebe Dorsey was the first to critique fashion like a Broadway play. The fact that I never saw her smoke stogies and swig

bourbon might only be because I wasn't always watching.

Then there was Dick Roraback. He was a terrific guy who'd been an editor there for years and wrote all sorts of offbeat stuff. I remember one piece he did about crossing the Danish border without his passport. All he had to prove that he was him was his American Express card. Dick wrote funny, and when the *IHT* wanted to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Stanley finding Livingstone, they sent him.

It was Bennett who, in 1869, had dispatched the *New York Herald's* best reporter, Henry Stanley, to investigate the disappearance in Africa of the Scottish medical missionary Dr. David Livingstone. Two years later, Stanley located the long-missing man on the shores of Lake Tanganyika. That's where Stanley supposedly said, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?"

Truth be told, he almost certainly didn't say that. Dick's centenary version of the encounter ran as a double-truck spread—two facing pages—in the middle of the paper, over five days. At least I seem to remember it as five days. Maybe

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Sometimes they would let me yank my own first edition off the conveyer belt, and there it was: my story, still warm, like a fresh-baked baguette.

it was only three. Still, it was a lot of space for one story. No paper would dare consider such a thing today. But that's what the IHT did.

It was a paper that loved writers and writing.

The two big stars in my day were Mary Blume and Waverley Root.

Mary was the great ghost of the IHT, because she never came into the office and few people could claim sightings of her. She would phone in her idea and send her copy over by messenger. She might have been the best crisp, clear writer the IHT ever had.

My problem was that I became her shadow. I was the one they called when Mary didn't want to write the story. Too often, I had to force a polite grin through disappointing wails of, "But we thought Mary Blume was covering this."

I admired her enormously, although I never met her. I once suggested we have lunch. She politely declined. I never held it against her, because no one else at the paper—at least no one I knew—ever had lunch with her, either.

I did, however, know Waverley. We spoke on the phone every now and then—he was in a wheelchair and never left his apartment—and although he habitually refused guests, I was invited to visit.

Once.

More people have won the Nobel Prize for Literature than had an audience at home with the elderly Waverley Root. He looked like Santa Claus, with one of those great white beards and wonderfully smiling eyes, but wrote much better than Old Saint Nick. Or, for that matter, most people.

Whenever he appeared on the back page, it was always a gem. Often it was something charmingly obscure about food, like why no one in France grew lime. But then there was his masterpiece. "I Never Knew Hemingway," a perfect essay about being the only journalist in Paris during the 1920s who was honest enough to admit that.

The back page, where Mary and Waverley and I wrote, was prime real estate. In the middle of the page, there was a box, 850 to 900 words long, about anything and everything. This was center stage at Carnegie Hall.

Below the fold were the IHT's not-to-be-missed classified ads—Americans selling dodgy cars, Americans with overpriced apartments for rent, and hookers looking for dates.

Above the fold, there was the gossipy People Column on the right side, and a humor column on the left side. That's where Art Buchwald was and where every Thanksgiving they reran his classic "Le Jour de Merci Donnant"—his

translation of *thanks and giving*—and why, for one day a year, Americans eat better than the French.

From the time I moved to the south of France in late 1970, I'd been writing 650-word features for the *Christian Science Monitor*. In those days, the CSM was one of the five papers read in the Oval Office, with news bureaux all over Europe. I had my first front-page byline with them, chasing Henry Kissinger all over Paris during the Vietnam War peace talks. They paid me \$35 per story, and added \$5 for a photo. My rent, with a balcony overlooking the Mediterranean, was \$72 a month.

Then along came the IHT, offering \$75 a pop. It was a no-brainer. Not just because of the money, but because it was the IHT.

Over the next 10 years, I wrote hundreds of back-page features for them, and developed my own form, using quotes the way television does, without the usual "he said" attribution. Now it's done all the time. I probably didn't invent it, but I made it mine. I also, eventually, got my rate all the way up to \$100.

My byline appeared from all over Europe, from various places in North America and from as far afield as Australia and Tahiti. I wrote about artists, pickpockets, addicted gamblers, world-championship Monopoly players, a woman who once posed for Modigliani, and the jazz great Earl "Fatha" Hines. I interviewed Richard Boone (he was fantastic), Graham Greene (he was lonely), Anthony Burgess (delightfully nuts), Andy Warhol (he took pictures of me taking pictures of him), Carmen McRae, Lino Ventura, Bobby Short and Walter Cronkite. (I told Walter that his retirement from the *CBS Evening News* meant the world would never be the same, and when I bumped into him in New York shortly before he died, I reminded him of that and he said, "You were right.")

I wrote about counterfeit stamps, hidden wine cellars, obscure museums where the public wasn't welcome, and Italian train bandits. I interviewed Elaine Stritch, Natalie Cole, Art Carney, Carl Reiner, Henry Moore, and Cary Grant (I asked him if he got laid a lot and he assured me he did). I even got to have lunch with Richard Burton, and when I asked him what he wanted to drink, he said, "Anything, sweetheart, as long it floats an ice cube."

And then, one day, it ended.

No one said goodbye. There was no handshake. I'm not sure if anyone even noticed. It was 1982. I left France for England to write books. By then, the IHT was desperate to become a serious business newspaper, to do battle with the newly arrived *Wall Street Journal European Edition*.

No one there today remembers me, or what the IHT and I shared. Waverley is gone. Mary has moved on. Mike and Hebe and Buddy are gone. So is Dick.

Intellectually, I understand why the NYT has turned off the life support machine. But I will never forgive them for doing that.

They're going to bury my newspaper.

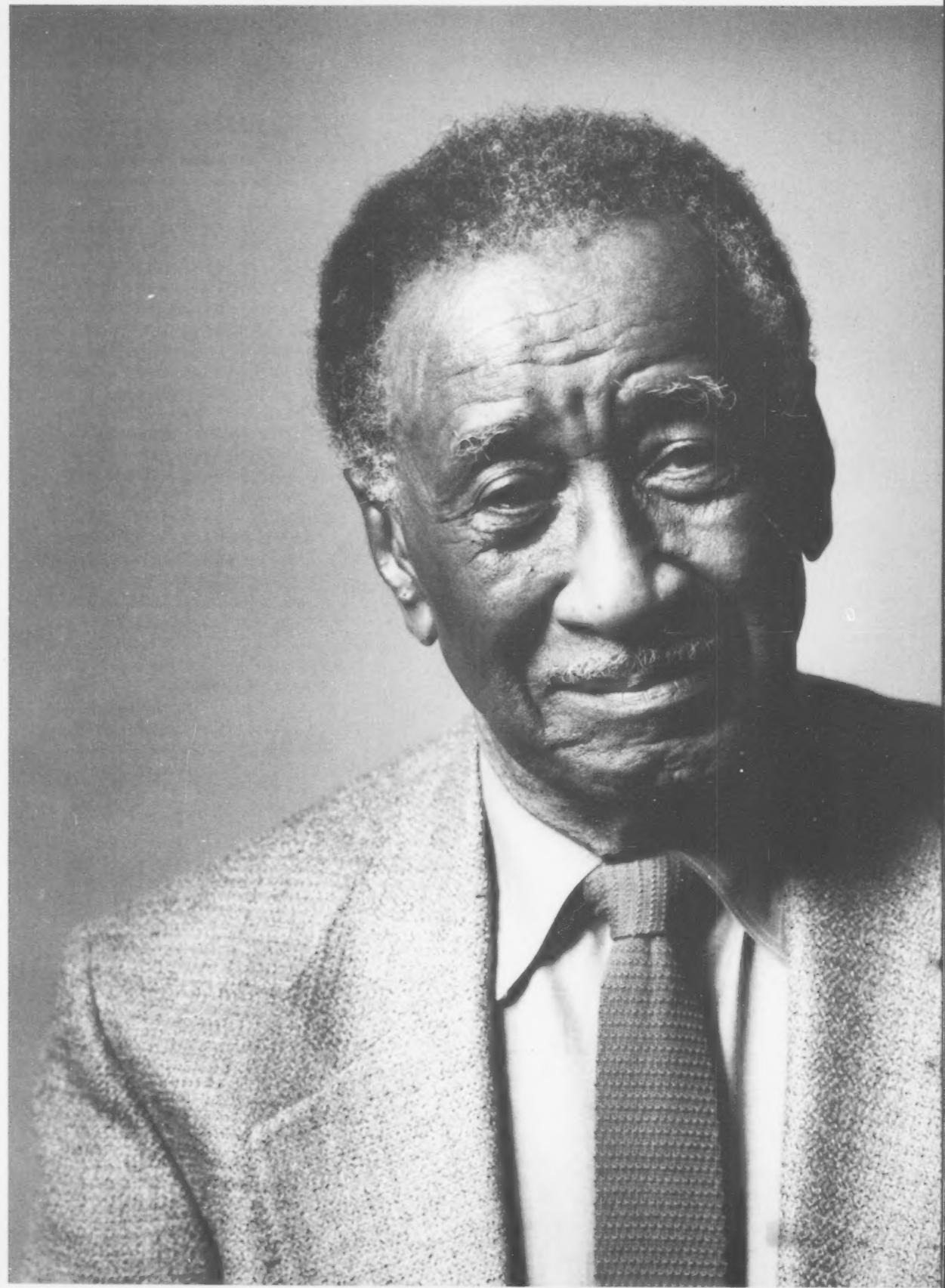
The *International Herald Tribune* is dead.

So what if I was just another one of her suitors?

*Mon amour*, we'll always have the rue de Berri. CJR

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JEFFREY ROBINSON is the international bestselling author of 27 books.



# Ideas + Reviews

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SECOND READ

## Home truths

For the essayist Albert Murray, the South was a state of mind

BY JAMES MARCUS

**T**here is nothing quite so liberating for a journalist as failing to carry out an assignment. I'm not talking about a blown deadline or minor change in game plan—I mean missing the original target by such a wide margin that it's clear the writer should have been aiming elsewhere in the first place. And there is no better example of such a fortuitous misfire than Albert Murray's *South to a Very Old Place* (1971). The book was first assigned as a rueful tour of the American South, aimed primarily at northern readers who might never set foot below the Mason-Dixon line. Instead Murray produced a kind of anti-travel book, in which the observable facts are constantly eclipsed by the author's memories and associations—even as he puts the torch to every bit of received wisdom about the region and its racial conundrums.

The germ of the book was a commission from *Harper's Magazine* back in 1969, when Willie Morris ruled the roost and his traditional sense of literary decorum was giving way to the more bumptious vibe of the New Journalists. The original idea was that Murray, an Alabama native who lived in Harlem, would take a swing through the South to talk with the rising generation of newspapermen and writers, including Edwin Yoder, Marshall Frady, Joe Cumming, Shelby Foote, and Walker Percy. All of these men were white. Murray, who was black, seemed intent on using his conversations with them as a cultural and intellectual barometer.

This was a shrewd idea, given the drastic atmospheric changes then under way in the region. The South had already begun its reluctant transformation in the wake of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The same year that Murray took his trip, Charles Evers became the first black mayor in Mississippi since Reconstruction. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court ordered the immediate desegregation of 33 Mississippi school districts, whose foot-dragging interpretation of "all deliberate speed" was essentially an act of defiance. Progress, and a dogged determination to squash it, were visible everywhere. By talking to white southerners who were also indisputable progressives, Murray may have hoped for a fresh spin on what was still the American dilemma.

At 53, he had published relatively little. Almost two decades in the US Air Force, with postings all over the country and abroad, had put a crimp in Murray's career as a writer. During his military service, he tinkered with a novel, part of which appeared in *New World Writing* in 1953. And once he left the Air Force and moved to New York City in 1962, Murray began contributing to *The New Leader*, *Life*, and *Harper's*, which ran a short story called "Stonewall Jackson's Waterloo" in

1969. Yet his track record was still fairly skimpy when he floated his idea for a Deep South odyssey.

No matter. Morris was impressed by Murray, whom he had met through Ralph Ellison. Both, Morris would later recall, refused to accept any prefabricated notions about race, politics, and identity. It was Ellison "and our mutual friend Al Murray, also a Negro writer from the South and a former teacher at Tuskegee, who suggested to me as much as anyone else I had ever known the extent to which the easy *abstractions*, the outsider's judgment of what one *ought* to feel, had simplified and dogmatized and hence dulled my own perceptions as an outlander in the East."

Harper's, meanwhile, was about to launch a series called *Going Home in America*, which would send a motley crew of writers on roots-excavating forays to Minnesota (Midge Deeter), Michigan (John Thompson), and Kentucky (Elizabeth Hardwick). And Murray's proposal was more or less folded into the series, at least in Willie Morris's mind. So Murray picked up his travel advance and set off on his journey, "not as a reporter as such and even less as an ultra gung-ho black black spokesman but rather as a Remus-derived, book-oriented downhome boy."

THAT SELF-DESCRIPTION ALONE SUGGESTS that conventional journalistic practice has been tossed out the window. Another clue that Murray's expedition will not proceed by normal means: his first stop is New Haven. That dour Connecticut city is not, he allows, part of the Deep South. But the Yale campus "has some very special down-home dimensions indeed these days," thanks to the presence of Robert Penn Warren and C. Vann Woodward. Which is to say that *home* is a more portable concept than we might think—that it's primarily a mental construct, ready to be unpacked whenever and wherever the imaginary traveler cares to rest his bones.

Murray, of course, had already tipped his hand on the very first page of the book. Going home, he writes, "has probably always had as much if not more to do with people as with landmarks and place names and locations on maps and

mileage charts." So it makes sense that having sought out two southerners at Yale—a "veritable citadel of Yankee-dom"—Murray immediately identifies them with two figures from his child-

hood: Woodward, the distinguished author of *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, is a dead ringer for an old Mobile insurance agent. And Warren evokes a ginger-haired auto mechanic known as Filling Station Red.

For Murray, *home* was primarily a mental construct, ready to be unpacked wherever and whenever a traveler cared to rest his bones.

hood. Woodward, the distinguished author of *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, is a dead ringer for an old Mobile insurance agent. And Warren evokes a ginger-haired auto mechanic known as Filling Station Red.

Murray wasn't really there for a stroll down some honeysuckle-scented memory lane. With Woodward he took up the hot-button topic of antebellum "house slaves"—whom black nationalists were then vilifying as traitorous Uncle Toms for having supposedly savored the perks of plantation life while the "field slaves" stewed in their cabins. (Woodward, like Murray, found the distinction specious and misleading.) In Warren's office, the conversation wandered from Joel Chandler Harris's Uncle Remus tales to Frederick Douglass to the passel of Nashville poets who dubbed themselves the "Fugitives" during the 1920s.

What Murray was after in each case was an alternative to what he called the "folklore of white supremacy and [the] fakelore of black pathology." To his mind, black Americans of the late 1960s were caught in an ideological squeeze play. On one side were the statistical, cookie-cutter theories advanced by white sociologists, which suggested that the black experience in America was primarily a hotbed of "frustration and crime, degradation, emasculation, and self-hatred." On the other side was the Black Power movement, with its separatism, fire-breathing militancy, and increasing contempt for mainstream civil-rights crusaders like Martin Luther King Jr.

Murray resisted both. The back-to-Africa rhetoric struck him as no less

were a black-and-white nation, in which the fate of the two races was forever intertwined. American Negroes (the term Murray preferred) were full participants in the American enterprise.

This seems relatively mild as such statements go—the sort of bumper-sticker piety you might see on a passing Volvo. But during the late 1960s, these were fighting words, and Murray would articulate them over and over in *South to a Very Old Place*. It wasn't merely that he enjoyed butting heads with his opponents (although he did). He was also trying to convey a deeper truth about life in the American South, which he thought was invisible to Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Malcolm X alike. Murray had no intention of sweeping the historic crime of slavery under the carpet, nor of soft-pedaling its destructive impact on black Americans. But he refused to view them as outsiders grafted onto some sort of Anglo-Saxon armature. No, they had gotten in on the ground floor, and their resilience and ingenuity in the face of epochal misery was now "indigenous to the United States, along with the Yankee tradition and that of the backwoodsman." They were, as he liked to say, Omni-Americans—as were we all.

LEAVING NEW HAVEN BEHIND HIM, Murray finally heads south. In North Carolina, he drops by the *Greensboro Daily News* to interview its associate editor, Edwin Yoder. He is struck by the young newspaperman's temperament, which he describes in typically additive fashion as "seed-store-feed-store plus courthouse square plus Chapel Hill plus Oxford Rhodes scholar." But like

Woodward and Warren before him, Yoder is hardly visible (or audible) during the conversation, having been displaced by the whirring mechanism of Murray's free-associative fancy.

Yoder reminds him of an earlier newsman and diagnostician of the American South, Jonathan Daniels. Which reminds him in turn of his first trip out into the great world as a Tuskegee graduate in 1939, when he missed his bus connection in Columbus, GA, and "spent the night on a couch in the red-velvet-draped, tenderloin-gothic, incense-sultry sickroom of the legendary but then-long-since-bedridden Ma Rainey." (How typical of Murray to toss off that last anecdote, which many a writer would have milked for a novel-length slab of pathos!) Which reminds him in turn of Faulkner, and then of Thomas Wolfe: two more Southern boys endlessly exploring the riddle of their own origins.

Murray's next stop is Atlanta, where he visits Joe Cumming, the local *Newsweek* bureau chief. Cumming, we are told, "is at work on one of *Newsweek's* periodic roundup reports on the progress of the so-called black revolution." And unlike Yoder, he manages to get in an occasional word edgewise. But as usual, the real action is elsewhere, as Murray pulls another contrarian ace from his sleeve. Tokenism, he argues, is good. "[W]hen you are talking about revolutionary change, tokens and rituals are often more important than huge quantities." And to bear out this argument, he spies none other than Atlanta Braves slugger Hank Aaron on the sidewalk—a "statistically unique, statistically insignificant, but no less symbolically overwhelming figure."

It should be clear by now that we're not going to learn much about the South's rising generation of white newspapermen. No doubt Murray, who was celebrated as a champion conversationalist—in a 1996 *New Yorker* profile, Henry Louis Gates Jr. noted his "astonishing gift of verbal fluency"—had some fascinating exchanges with them. But even if the author had carefully taped and transcribed this material, it would have produced a modest report for *Harper's*. And I'm guessing that after 20 years of delay, during which he saw

his old friend Ralph Ellison race to the head of the literary pack with *Invisible Man*, Murray was eager to open up the throttle.

So instead of the reportage he had promised Willie Morris—and instead of the short, pugnacious *New Leader* pieces he would soon collect in *The Omni-Americans: Black Experience and American Culture* (1970)—Murray aimed at something more ambitious. In his rearview mirror were the modernist giants: Faulkner, Joyce, Hemingway, Auden, Proust. There were also a number of formative critics, including Kenneth Burke, Constance Rourke, and that supremely British eccentric Lord Raglan, whose *The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth, and Drama* (1936) shaped many of Murray's ideas about literary art.

What he took from these models, which were literary rather than journalistic, was a belief in elaborately stylized prose and deep-dish subjectivity. Not so different, you might say, from the New Journalists who were just then hitting their stride—especially the other Tom Wolfe, who had long since knocked down the Chinese wall between himself and what he was describing. But Murray went further, and made up his own rules. You argued with others but primarily with yourself. You observed the world with finicky accuracy but then transformed it into art. And the cartwheeling, conversational tone of his sentences was his alone, as were the onrushing rhythms and the pungent, hyphenated adjectives marching along in single file—or more often sprinting.

IN THE INITIAL CHAPTERS OF *SOUTH to a Very Old Place*, these qualities are something of a mixed blessing. Murray's musings are comical and attractively cantankerous, yet they seem to exist in a vacuum—in the sealed chamber of his own sensibility. He can't stop ruminating, arguing, saddling up one hobbyhorse after another: house slaves, sociology, tokenism, black matriarchy, protest fiction. The reader becomes increasingly desperate for some hard evidence that Murray has actually left his apartment in Lenox Terrace.

In the second half of the book, however, something marvelous happens:

The outside world finally gets equal billing. Perhaps Murray sensed the need to dilute his argumentation with some sinus-clearing actuality. It also seems likely that his personal connection to Tuskegee and Mobile (where he grew up) made him more impressionable and open to his surroundings. In any case, while en route to Tuskegee, Murray is overwhelmed by memories. He recalls his first Greyhound bus ride to the college, the songs that were playing on the radio that summer, and "the whiteness of academic columns as you saw them through the flat preautumnal greenness of the elms lining Campus Avenue."

Some of these memories, oddly enough, are ascribed to other Tuskegee students of the era, as if Murray can creep out of his solipsistic shell only by degrees. And some have a collegiate friskiness to them, which seems only appropriate. Here, for example, Murray runs down the faculty roster, culminating in that agricultural wizard George Washington Carver, who was then so old that Henry Ford would soon pay to have an elevator installed in Carver's Tuskegee lodgings:

They all will remember W. Henri Payne with his brown skin Frenchman's moustache whether they took French or not that year. They will remember Alphonse Henningburg and his beautiful wife. Nor will anybody have forgotten that the only way to repeat anything Dr. Carver said was to imitate him in as high a pitch as possible (adding precisely enunciated dirty words which would have horrified him: "They ask me: 'Dr. Carver what makes rubber stretch?' and I say to them quite frankly I don't cop what the fuck makes that shit act up like that, I don't dig no rubber-stretching shit. I dig peanuts, I dig potatoes")

It's instructive to compare Murray's Tuskegee interlude with the one V.S. Naipaul included almost 20 years later in *A Turn in the South*—after Murray himself prepped him for the visit! Naipaul's account is careful and cumulative. He gets the facts, elicits testimony from a couple of locals, and as he explores the broiling interior of Tuskegee's Dorothy Hall, notes that the "colors in the hot paneled club upstairs were like the colors of a gentlemen's club." The irony is

unmistakable, but also quiet: a murmur. Whereas Murray is sweeping, breathless, atmospheric. He wants the *feeling* of the place, and the memories of it, and he wants to surprise himself in the act of remembering.

In Mobile, at last, he is really back home. There the Scott Paper Towel factory has gobbled up the landscape of his youth like a "storybook dragon disguised as a wide-sprawling, foul-smelling, smoke-chugging factory, a not really ugly mechanical monster now squatting along old Blackshear Mill Road." There Murray wanders the streets and connects with half-remembered acquaintances. And there, for the first time in the book, other voices climb confidently into the driver's seat.

In fact, the chapter is jammed with lengthy, back-porch soliloquies. Murray seldom identifies who is talking. And given the preoccupations of the speakers, which happen to be *his* preoccupations, it's pretty clear that he orchestrated and intensified what they had to say (much as he would later channel Count Basie in the bandleader's autobiography, *Good Morning Blues*). In any case, the results are frequently hilarious. One such speaker gives the back of his hand to the Black Power dream of African repatriation. The Africans, he says, will

take one look at them goddam jive-time Zulu haircuts and them forty-dollar hand-made shoes and they going to lock your American ass up in one of them same old slave-trading jails they put our ancestors in, and they going to have you writing letters back over here to this same old dog-ass white man in the United States of America asking for money. Hey, wait. Hey, listen to this. Ain't going to let them get no further than the god-dam waterfront. They go lock them up with a goddam Sears, Roebuck catalogue. I'm talking about right on the dock, man, and have them making out order blanks to Congress for Cocolas and transistors, and comic books, cowboy boots and white side walls and helicopters and all that stuff.

This is identity politics as black comedy, with some incidental buckshot fired at American-style consumerism. It is also a sly bit of self-mockery, since

Murray himself was an avid consumer of fine clothes, fine art, audio equipment, and probably the occasional transistor. And as a boyhood admirer of Tom Mix, he must have longed for the cow-

## Murray's own path was circuitous, and never quite yielded the [sort of] fame that he deserved.

boy boots as well. Maybe he should have shared the microphone more often.

MURRAY'S CHRONICLE OF HIS JOURNEY never appeared in *Harper's*. Perhaps Willie Morris found it too weird and wandering for his taste. It was one thing, after all, to devote an entire issue of the magazine to the heavy-breathing theatrics of Norman Mailer's "The Prisoner of Sex," quite another to publish Murray's unclassifiable (and occasionally unreadable) circuit of the South. More to the point, Morris himself was forced out in 1971. The owners argued that revenue was down and blamed the editor's penchant for long, liberal, supposedly ad-repelling articles. In that climate, it's no wonder that the raw materials for *South to a Very Old Place* got spiked.

Murray wrote the book anyway. When *South to a Very Old Place* was published in 1971, it was nominated for the National Book Award, and reviewed most prominently by a young novelist named Toni Morrison. She praised Murray's resistance to racial stereotypes and his mixture of "tender familiarity and brutish alienation." What Morrison didn't like was his chuckling disdain for "the Afro- part of Afro-Americans"—i.e., his unwillingness to view himself as part of a great diaspora—as well as the short shrift he gave to black nationalism.

Who was right? Murray's voice is so persuasive that it's tempting to declare him the victor, but the argument is no simpler now than it was then. In a way, these two formidable intellects were re-staging the old quarrel between Booker

T. Washington, with his emphasis on stoic self-reliance, and W.E.B. Du Bois, who crusaded relentlessly for equal rights at home and Pan-African solidarity abroad. That Murray would opt for the former position is no surprise—he was a product of Tuskegee, which Washington had founded in 1881. As for Morrison, she was not only a generation younger, but had taught and mentored such firebrands as Stokely Carmichael, who made the phrase "Black Power" part of the popular lexicon. A meeting of the minds was unlikely.

Morrison would go on to celebrity and the Nobel Prize. (Murray, never a huge Morrison fan, told Gates that the award was "tainted with do-goodism.") His own path was more circuitous, and never quite yielded the sort of fame that he deserved. Still, Murray would publish many volumes of fiction and criticism, as well as *sui-generis* productions like *Stomping the Blues* (1976), a euphoric study of American music. And his influence on the next generation of black intellectuals, including Stanley Crouch, Cornel West, and Stephen Carter, was enormous. They didn't necessarily endorse all of Murray's ideas, but they inherited his allergic reaction to received wisdom. They also saw their own role in the nation's cultural life as central—they were, as Murray put it to Robert Boynton in 1995, "just a bunch of Negroes trying to save America."

And it all began with *South to a Very Old Place*. The book's speed, intensity, tenderness, and pugilistic laughter remain as fresh as ever. It is by no means a perfect creation. There are stretches where you wish the author would simply stop talking and let the particulars speak for themselves. Blazing a fresh trail through the briar patch, turning every assertion about race and identity and the storied South on its head, he seems almost determined to leave the reader behind. Yet you keep turning the pages, eager as ever to accompany Murray around the next bend and to share with him the purest of all literary intoxicants: self-discovery. **CJR**

JAMES MARCUS is the deputy editor of *Harper's Magazine*. His next book, *Glad to the Brink of Fear: A Portrait of Emerson in Eighteen Installments*, will be published in 2015.

# Turn on, log in, opt out?

Morozov, Lanier, and others consider the future of the Internet

BY LAUREN KIRCHNER

AT A TECH CONFERENCE IN LAKE Tahoe three years ago, Eric Schmidt gave a talk that included a startling statistic. Schmidt—who was then CEO of Google, so we took his word for it—announced that every two days, we create as much digital content as we did from the dawn of civilization up until 2003. By “we,” of course, he meant those of us who are connected to the Internet: about two billion of the world’s seven billion people. And by “create content,” he meant “upload data.” Lots and lots of data. Five billion gigabytes of data, every two days.

A not insignificant amount of that content is created by debates about what this constant hyperconnectivity is doing to our brains, our bodies, our children, our relationships, and our sense of ourselves in the natural world. These debates are led by an increasingly entrenched class of cybergurus eager to help clarify and contextualize our everyday digital acts. Technology advances so rapidly, and then gets folded into our daily lives so effortlessly, that it can feel like a force of nature, or a political movement—one that we can join, or avoid, but not one that we could control. The pundits want to convince us that we are indeed in the driver’s seat—and then steer us toward their own particular visions for the digital future.

Lately, the discussion has focused more directly on the data itself—those

five billion gigabytes of “likes” and retweets being created every single day. Every time we search on Google or Amazon, or talk on Twitter or Facebook, that information is recorded somewhere. Where does it go, and to whom does it belong? Could we use it for a higher good? Could it mean the end of privacy? Could it mean the end of death? What’s coming next? What should come next? A veritable data-dump of new books, by a representative sample of cybergurus, attempt to answer these questions and more.

ONE OF THE BREEZIEST READS AMONG the books is California lieutenant governor Gavin Newsom’s *Citizenville: How to Take the Town Square Digital and Re-invent Government*, written with the help of Lisa Dickey. In it, Newsom laments that, at a time when people are more engaged with each other (online) than ever before, voter turnout has never been lower. Trust in government is down, and, while elected leaders say they know what their constituents want, they’re only guessing. No surprise there, says Newsom. Most politicians only use online tools to connect with the little guy when they’re campaigning for his vote. Web 2.0 is exponentially improving Americans’ daily lives, Newsom writes, but government is stuck in 1.0 mode: “Government right now is functioning on the cutting edge—of 1973.” Burn!

Newsom’s solution, in a few key-words: transparency, data, creativity, innovation, and gamification. Clay Shirky’s term “cognitive surplus” is evoked a lot in this book. So are a pastiche of insights on Web 2.0 from the likes of Web publishing magnate Arianna Huffington, Twitter co-founder Ev Williams, and apparent paparazzi expert George Clooney. So are frequent reminders of how Newsom himself has already encouraged innovation, first as mayor of San Francisco and now as lieutenant governor of California. (“And whatever might come next” is left unsaid.)

In general, Newsom frames his technological solutions as easy, fun, and unreservedly benign, which makes him a very likable but lightweight cyberguru indeed. But of course, Newsom is likely not vying for expert status, or a lucrative consulting gig—he merely wants to borrow some ideas from the tech industry and overlay them onto the civil-service world, giving his public image a tech-savvy sheen in the process.

He takes the title *Citizenville* from the inane and addictive online game “Farmville”—Newsom hopes that people will participate more if they are given gamelike incentives to do so. (One of the book’s chapters is titled “Angry Birds for Democracy.”) Maybe civic-minded developers would build crime-mapping apps for free as part of a programming contest. Maybe citizens would report potholes if they were given online currency to be traded in at local businesses. Maybe government staffers could participate in some kind of Yelp-like scoreboard. “If the Bronx’s DMV comes from behind to overtake Brooklyn for the highest ratings, do you think that will get Brooklyn’s competitive juices flowing?” Newsom asks, answering, “I certainly do.” Anyone who has been to the Brooklyn DMV might disagree.

*Citizenville* illuminates some of the problems with big-idea Internet books as a genre. It can sometimes take up to three years from start to finish to publish a book, but digital technology moves at the speed of fiber optics. So books about the Internet have to try to be broad and idea-based enough to remain relevant, while using enough specific examples to remain true. Newsom’s book fails to strike the proper balance, as many of

his examples of innovation—Farmville among them—are old news by now.

What's more, Newsom's lessons about transparency and gamification may make sense in a city like San Francisco, but it's unclear how well they scale to other towns, where there are presumably fewer Foursquare-addicts and underemployed programmers. Newsom, like many cyberoptimists, seems to believe that if an idea is successful in one place at one time, it will succeed in all places at all times. I'm not sure whether this is a function of disingenuousness, or of naïveté. But I wish he'd consider that the best of all possible digital worlds isn't as inevitable as he tends to think.

THEN AGAIN, UNCHECKED PESSIMISM about technology's potential can prove just as problematic as blind optimism. Evgeny Morozov derides gamification, as he derides many, many other ideas and their cheerleaders, in his ruthless new book *To Save Everything: Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism*. He defines solutionism as "an unhealthy preoccupation with sexy, monumental, and narrow-minded solutions...to problems that are extremely complex, fluid, and contentious."

For Morozov, the gamification of civic engagement is a prime example of what he sees as a dangerous pattern in tech, because it emphasizes "fun" while forgoing serious consideration of long-term consequences. He asserts that, if governments encourage citizens to focus more on their self-interest than their sense of duty, it will eventually narrow people's conception of the common good, and can even make them less likely to do other societally necessary things in the absence of incentives.

The "Quantified Self" movement also takes a beating here; Morozov calls its adherents "datalogists" and says they are promoting a narcissistic trend that will ultimately undermine the privacy of everyone—even those of us who don't yet tweet our sleep cycles. Technology shapes character, Morozov argues, and before it hurts us all, we must collectively unlearn the habit of solutionism—"by transcending the limits it imposes on our imaginations and by rebelling against its value system."

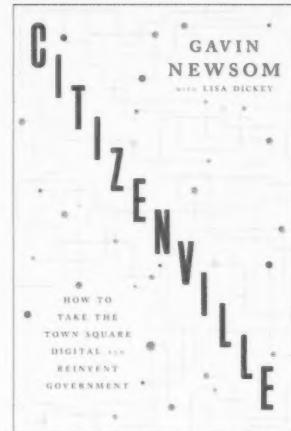
Morozov seemed to come out of

nowhere in 2011 with his widely discussed debut *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*. The book introduced the mainstream to the term "cyberutopians"—those Silicon Valley enthusiasts who synonymize technology with progress, and the Web with democracy. Morozov showed how Internet tools are used by authoritarian regimes to actually impinge on civil liberties just as often as they are used by freedom-seeking revolutionaries. *The Net Delusion* was a welcome response to the months of punditry and intellectual oversimplification surrounding the Arab Spring of the year before.

This time around, his adversaries are much more abstract. "I don't have the luxury of tackling a clear-cut issue in the current book...gone is the moral simplicity of fighting authoritarianism," Morozov writes in his postscript. "In this book, what's truly wicked are not the problems—those may not even exist—but the solutions proposed to address them."

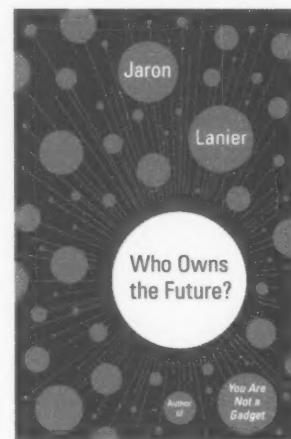
Morozov is correct that the answers to life's questions are never as tidy as a TED talk. But I wonder if he's being honest about who the enemy is here. Can he possibly sustain 358 pages of rancor against the very *idea* of technology-based problem solving? Or is this really just about all the people who won't shut up about it? He's got quite the hit list: Clay Shirky, Jeff Jarvis, Jonathan Zittrain, obviously; Steven Johnson, Steven Levy, Kevin Kelly, Lawrence Lessig, Tim Wu, Peter Diamandis, Parag Khanna, Daniel Boorstin, Wael Ghonim, both McGonigal sisters, Khan University, The Sunlight Foundation, and most tech reporters. All are repeatedly called out; none are spared from his contempt. Also note Morozov's Twitter bio: "There are idiots. Look around." Scorched-earth tactics tend to destroy the good wood with the bad; in the end, all that remains are those intellectual parasites who wear their bad ideas like a hard shell, impervious to criticism.

He's right, of course, that there are hucksters and gurus everywhere. Many of them, in fact, are fond of writing Internet books and launching subsequent speaking tours. Some of them can't seem to debate their positions without shutting down the conversation by declaring that their interlocutors "just don't



**Citizenville: How to Take the Town Square Digital and Reinvent Government**

By Gavin Newsom, with Lisa Dickey  
The Penguin Press  
248 pages, Hardcover \$25.95



**Who Owns the Future?**

By Jaron Lanier  
Simon & Schuster  
416 pages  
Hardcover \$28

understand how the Internet works." Morozov vents:

The Internet, thus, is believed to possess an inherent nature, a logic, a theology, and that nature is rapidly unfolding in front of us. We can just stand back and watch; 'The Internet' will take care of itself—and us. If your privacy disappears in the process, this is simply what the Internet gods wanted all along.

EVGENY MOROZOV

*The Folly of Technological Solutionism*

# TO SAVE EVERYTHING CLICK

To Save Everything, Click Here:  
The Folly of Technological  
Solutionism

By Evgeny Morozov  
PublicAffairs  
432 pages, Hardcover \$28.99

## ERIC SCHMIDT JARED COHEN THE NEW DIGITAL AGE

RESHAPING THE FUTURE  
OF PEOPLE, NATIONS  
AND BUSINESS

The New Digital Age:  
Reshaping the Future  
of People, Nations and Business  
By Eric Schmidt and Jared Cohen  
Alfred A. Knopf  
315 pages, Hardcover \$26.95

Agreed. If anyone tries to sell you this version of the Internet, then you shouldn't buy what they're selling, whether they're selling a product or selling themselves. The Internet is not an autonomous force; it is run by people, according to business practices and policies that we can change if we want to. To make these changes, though, we all have to understand what's at stake, and what our options are. All options are

still open—all except slowing down, or turning back.

OF ALL THE PEOPLE IMAGINING WHAT could come next, perhaps the most radical thinker is Jaron Lanier, who now follows up 2010's *You Are Not a Gadget* with *Who Owns the Future?* In it, he proposes a new way to think about our personal data: as currency. He doesn't mean this figuratively. Lanier thinks that it's time for us finally be compensated, in real dollars and cents, for all of the data we contribute to make services like Google, Apple, Amazon, and Facebook function. The data-rich elite at the top make money off of us on the bottom; why shouldn't the transaction go both ways?

Lanier got his start as a Silicon Valley *wunderkind* himself, pioneering research in video games and Virtual Reality from the 1980s on. So he comes at his tech-skepticism honestly. In this book, Lanier describes his bafflement at seeing what his colleagues from the old days have done with their unique skillsets. "Hacker culture" was obsessed with personal liberty, he writes, but some of his old friends "eventually became very rich building giant cross-referenced dossiers on masses of people, which were put to use by financiers, advertisers, insurers, or other concerns nurturing fantasies of operating the world by remote control."

Lanier coins the term "Siren Servers" to describe networks that lure us in with free services or low prices while siphoning off valuable personal information. Everything we do on Facebook becomes fodder for advertisers. Every time someone sells a book online, anywhere in the world, Amazon finds that price and undersells it. Siren servers collect and analyze all of our information, and whatever conclusions or connections are made as a result are declared "proprietary." Lanier argues that this imbalance of power has repercussions both economic (by disempowering the middle class) and political (by handing elections to whichever side has the most data and the fastest computers).

Why not just opt out? Lanier's argument, like Morozov's, is that you just can't. Take Facebook, for example. There is a certain "social immobility"

"In this powerfully plainspoken account, one of the leading female journalists of the Vietnam War relays her personal experience of the bloody conflict that divided America and changed the global political landscape."

—Publishers Weekly

BEVERLY DEEPE KEEVER

## Death Zones & Darling Spies

*Seven Years of Vietnam War Reporting*



In 1961, twenty-six-year-old journalist Beverly Deep set off on a trip around the world. Allotting just two weeks to South Vietnam, she was still there seven years later, having then earned the distinction of being the longest-serving American correspondent covering the Vietnam War and garnering a Pulitzer Prize nomination. In *Death Zones and Darling Spies*, Beverly Deep Keever describes what it was like for a farm girl from Nebraska to find herself halfway around the world, trying to make sense of one of the nation's bloodiest and bitterest wars.

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to the whole experience, in that, once you're in, you're all in. Lanier writes:

Once a critical mass of conversation is on Facebook, then it's hard to get a conversation going elsewhere.... It's no longer commerce, but soft blackmail. And it's not Facebook's fault! We, the idealists, insisted that information be demonetized online, which meant that services about information, instead of the information itself, would be the main profit centers.

So what's the alternative? Lanier proposes an entirely new online economy, one with roots in pre-World-Wide-Web thinking about the Internet. The Web now works on a single-link language, **HTML**: Any website can link to any other, in one direction. But before Tim Berners-Lee developed **HTML**, Ted Nelson conceived of Project Xanadu, a hypothetical digital network with **two-way linking**. In this system, every node contains information about both what it links out to, and what other nodes link to it.

This, says Lanier, would be the key to a better online economy. "If the system remembers where information originally came from, then the people who are the sources of information can be paid for it." So, for instance, every time your YouTube video was cut up into a political ad, or every time your Facebook activity was somehow used in an ad scheme that made someone money, or every time Google analyzed a translation you wrote in order to improve its Google Translate tool, you'd know about it, and you'd get a micropayment.

Lanier's central argument would have been strengthened, though, if he had spent more time and attention on financial institutions and intelligence agencies, which he really only briefly mentions. When those behemoths track our preferences and purchases, we really don't get anything in exchange. At least Google and Facebook give us free services while they're manipulating us.

Another slight weakness is that almost all of Lanier's argument consists of *why* this new "humanistic online economy" is such a good idea, rather than *how* it would actually work. Lanier focuses more on philosophy than pragmatics, which may frustrate some

## Two-way linking, says Lanier, would be the key to a better online economy.

readers. Still, it is refreshing to have a brilliant technological mind working on the users' behalf for once. And it's good to see a tech innovator thinking seriously and creatively about what technology can do—and what it can't.

LANIER, UNLIKE MOROZOV, IS MORE excited about building up new ways of thinking about technology than categorically tearing down other peoples' ideas and arguments. But one area of common ground between the two is their shared disgust with what they both see as Silicon Valley's self-obsessed, small-minded utopians too drunk on the power of "disruption" (previously: "transformation") to acknowledge the inherent limitations of technology.

Some of the most insightful passages in Lanier's book explain how themes of "self-actualization" borrowed from eastern religions have combined with Silicon Valley's tech bubble to build a faith in technology as the means to ultimate self-expression and self-perfection: "Going about my day," he writes, "there is nothing unusual at all about running into a friend at the coffee shop who is a for-real, serious scientist working on making people immortal."

"Cyber-Panglossian fallacies rule Silicon Valley conversations," writes Lanier. "Dreamlands of abstractions are a dime a dozen these days; what works in Palo Alto is assumed to work in Penang," writes Morozov. Not having spent much time in Palo Alto myself, I may have been inclined to believe these generalizations, had I not just read Eric Schmidt and Jared Cohen's *The New Digital Age: Reshaping the Future of People, Nations and Business*.

When Cohen was a young staffer at the State Department, he was criticized by Morozov and others for displaying a naïveté about the role of Twitter in revolutions in the Middle East. For

his part, Schmidt's frequent soundbites, as they are scornfully quoted throughout Morozov's book, make him sound like kind of a Google-eyed goof. So, full disclosure, I did not expect to like this book. Just as Gavin Newsom's book was a commercial for Gavin Newsom, I suspected this would be a commercial for Google—where Schmidt is now executive chairman and Cohen now directs Google Ideas. Instead, it is a rigorously researched, neutral, and clear-headed exercise in political science, one in which Google is rarely mentioned.

The book grew out of an essay Schmidt and Cohen wrote together for *Foreign Affairs* in late 2010. The context in which their collaboration began is rather telling. They met in 2009, in Baghdad, "engaging with Iraqis around the critical question of how technology can be used to help rebuild a society." (Schmidt also raised eyebrows with visits to North Korea and Myanmar earlier this year.) They say they were surprised to see mobile devices everywhere in Baghdad, even while most people had limited access to electricity, food, and drinking water.

Fittingly, their project here focuses less on the two billion of us who are already online, and more on anticipating the other five billion people across the world who will be coming online in the near future. For those newcomers, both the promise and perils of technology are much greater than they are for us—which in turn makes it all the more vital that companies, governments, and everyone else stop and think now about how to help mitigate the negative effects of that transition. Of the five billion newcomers, Schmidt and Cohen write:

They'll receive the greatest benefits from connectivity but also face the worst drawbacks of the digital age. It is this population that will drive the revolutions and challenge the police states, and they'll also be the people tracked by their governments, harassed by online hate mobs and disoriented by marketing wars.

What makes this book so thorough is the authors' insistence on showing the negative aspects of every technological innovation alongside the positive ones. "Technology is an equal-opportunity

enabler," they write: It empowers diplomats and terrorists alike. Stuxnet was the first major cyberattack to do real damage in the physical world, but not the last. Political revolutions will be easier to start, but riskier, and harder to finish successfully. "To summarize," Schmidt and Cohen write, "states will long for the days when they only had to think about foreign and domestic policies in the physical world."

Unlike Morozov or Lanier, Schmidt and Cohen deal with the details of how digital technology will likely alter political and economic relationships, rather than presenting abstract philosophies about it. Both types of books are exciting to read, but because Schmidt and Cohen focus so much on the potential problems ahead, theirs feels more grounded in reality. And unlike Newsom, it doesn't feel like the authors are trying to use their book to present themselves as thought leaders or to burnish their public image.

Then again, because of their positions at Google, they already are de facto leaders in the industry. They don't need to sell themselves or their ideas—the world has already bought in. So why did they write this book, and why is it so good? While this book isn't a commercial for Google, it is true that many of the ideas they discuss—namely the importance of more powerful encryption tools overseas, especially to news organizations, and the incredible role that real-time translation software will play in reshaping how people do business across the world—will most likely be ideas that Google will lead the way on, and therefore profit from.

It could be that the book itself—like Gmail, like YouTube—is yet another "Silicon Server," an exciting consumer product that eventually benefits Google, the friendly behemoth that will one day own all of our personal information and get rich off of every part of our daily lives. I can no longer enjoy anything related to digital technology without being suspicious of ulterior motives and considering all of the long-term implications. I can blame, and thank, the cyberskeptics for that. **CJR**

LAUREN KIRCHNER is a freelance writer in Brooklyn and a former CJR assistant editor.



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# It doesn't add up

A science writer questions the conventional wisdom on the shortage of US-born STEM workers

BY BERYL LIEFF BENDERLY

IN LATE FEBRUARY, CHRISTINE MILLER and Sona Shah went to the Capitol Hill office of Miller's senator, Barbara Mikulski, a Maryland Democrat, to talk about immigration reform and the job market for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) workers. Miller, an American-born MIT grad with a PhD in biochemistry, had 20 years of research experience when Johns Hopkins University laid her off in 2009 because of funding cuts. Shah, an Indian-born US citizen with degrees in physics and engineering, had been laid off earlier by a computer company that was simultaneously hiring foreign workers on temporary visas. Proposals to increase admission of foreign STEM workers to the US, Miller and Shah told Erin Neill, a member of Mikulski's staff, would worsen the already glutted STEM labor market.

According to Miller, Neill told them this is not the argument "she normally encounters on this issue." The conventional wisdom is that tech companies and universities can't find enough homegrown scientists to hire, so they need to import them from China and India. Neill suggested to Miller and Shah that "we would have more impact if we represented a large, organized group."

Miller and Shah are, in fact, part of a large group. Figures from the National Institutes of Health, the National Academies, the National Science Foundation,

and other sources indicate that hundreds of thousands of STEM workers in the US are unemployed or underemployed. But they are not organized, and their story is being largely ignored in the debate over immigration reform.

The two main STEM-related proposals currently part of that debate in Congress would increase the number of temporary high-skill worker visas (also called guestworker visas), and give green cards to every foreign graduate of an American college with a master's or PhD in a STEM field. Media coverage of these proposals has generally hewed, uncritically, to the unfounded notion that America isn't producing enough native talent in the science and engineering fields to satisfy the demands of businesses and universities—and that foreign-born workers tend to be more entrepreneurial and innovative than their American-born counterparts. Allowing more STEM immigrants, the story goes, is key to adding jobs to the beleaguered US economy.

It is a narrative that has been skillfully packaged and promoted by well-funded advocacy groups as essential to the national interest, but in reality it reflects the economic interests of tech companies and universities.

High-tech titans like Bill Gates, Steve Case, and Mark Zuckerberg are repeatedly quoted proclaiming a dearth of talent that imperils the nation's future.

Politicians, advocates, and articles and op-eds published by media outlets—including *The New York Times*, *Forbes*, CNN, *Slate*, and others—invoke such foreign-born entrepreneurs as Google's Sergey Brin or Yahoo's Jerry Yang, as if arrival from abroad (Brin and Yang came to the US as children) explains the success of the companies they founded...with partners who are US natives. Journalists endorse studies that trumpet the job-creating skills of these entrepreneurs from abroad, while ignoring the weaknesses that other scholars find in the research.

Meanwhile, The National Science Board's biennial book, *Science and Engineering Indicators*, consistently finds that the US produces several times the number of STEM graduates than can get jobs in their fields. Recent reports from the National Institutes of Health, the National Academies, and the American Chemical Society warn that *over-production* of STEM PhDs is damaging America's ability to recruit native-born talent, and advise universities to limit the number of doctorates they produce, especially in the severely glutted life sciences. In June 2012, for instance, the American Chemical Society's annual survey found record unemployment among its members, with only 38 percent of new PhDs, 50 percent of new master's graduates, and 33 percent of new bachelor's graduates in fulltime jobs. Overall, STEM unemployment in the US is more than twice its pre-recession level, according to congressional testimony by Ron Hira, a science-labor-force expert at the Rochester Institute of Technology.

And yet, a bill introduced in Congress last year that would have heeded the NIH recommendation by limiting visas for biomedical scientists was attacked in a *Forbes* article that suggested it could delay progress on the search for a cure for cancer by keeping out able researchers.

FOREIGN-BORN SCIENTISTS AND ENGINEERS have, of course, contributed significantly to American society as innovators and entrepreneurs—and the nation's immigration policy certainly needs repair. But many leading STEM-labor-force experts agree that the great majority of STEM workers entering the

country contribute less to innovative breakthroughs or job growth for Americans than to the bottom lines of the companies and universities that hire them.

Temporary visas allow employers to pay skilled workers below-market wages, and these visas are valid only for specific jobs. Workers are unable to take another job, making them akin to indentured servants. Universities also use temporary visas to recruit international graduate students and postdoctoral scientists, mainly from China, to do the gruntwork for professors' grants. "When the companies say they can't hire anyone, they mean that they can't hire anyone at the wage they want to pay," said Jennifer Hunt, a Rutgers University labor economist, at last year's Mortimer Caplin Conference on the World Economy.

Research by Hira, Norman Matloff of the University of California-Davis, Richard Freeman of Harvard, and numerous others has shown how temporary visas have allowed employers to flood STEM labor markets and hold down the cost of tech workers and scientists doing grant-supported university research. Wages in the IT industry rose rapidly throughout the 1990s, but have been essentially flat or declining in the past decade, which coincides with the rising number of guestworkers on temporary visas.

In his new book, *Why Good People Can't Get Jobs*, Peter Cappelli, a human-resources specialist at the Wharton School, concludes that companies' reported hiring difficulties don't arise from a shortage of qualified workers, but from rigid recruitment practices that use narrow categories and definitions and don't take advantage of the applicants' full range of abilities. Companies so routinely evade protections in the visa system designed to prevent displacement of American citizens that immigration lawyers have produced videos about how it is done. For instance, tech companies that import temporary workers, mainly recent graduates from India, commonly discard more expensive, experienced employees in their



**Homegrown** President Obama, seen here visiting a technical college in North Carolina, supports bringing more foreign STEM workers to the US, despite high unemployment among US workers.

late 30s or early 40s, often forcing them, as Ron Hira and other labor-force researchers note, to train their replacements as they exit. Age discrimination, Hira says, is "an open secret" in the tech world.

The temporary-visa system also facilitates the offshoring of STEM work, particularly in the IT field, to low-wage countries. Outsourcing companies use the temporary visas to bring workers to the US to learn the jobs that the client company is planning to move to temp workers' home country. The 10 firms with the largest number of H-1B visas, the most common visa for high-skill workers, are all in the business of shipping work overseas, and former Indian commerce minister Kamil Nath famously labeled the H-1B "the outsourcing visa."

These practices have helped to reduce incomes and career prospects in STEM fields drastically enough to produce what UC Davis's Norman Matloff calls "an internal brain drain" of talented Americans to other, more promising career opportunities such as Wall Street, healthcare, or patent law.

The proposal before Congress to automatically grant green cards to all STEM students with graduate degrees—regardless of field, origin, or quality—would exacerbate the problem of already overcrowded markets, according to new research by Hal Salzman of Rutgers University, Daniel Keuhn of American University, and B. Lindsay Lowell of Georgetown University. It also would benefit universities facing tough financial times by dramatically increasing the allure of American graduate schools, and thus the income potential to universities. And, as Republican Senator Chuck Grassley said at a 2011 hearing, it would "further erode the opportunities of American students. Universities would in essence become visa mills."

Academic departments generally determine how many graduate students they admit, or postdocs they hire, based on the teaching and research workforce they need, not on the career opportunities awaiting young scientists. Unlike companies, universities have access to unlimited temporary-worker visas. This allows universities to hire skilled lab workers and pay them very low,

"trainee" wages. Postdocs are an especially good deal for professors running labs because they don't require tuition, which must be paid out of the professors' grants, notes Paula Stephan, a labor economist at Georgia State University, in her book *How Economics Shapes Science*.

IMMIGRANTS CONSTITUTE THE NATION's "only shot at getting a growing economy," because they "start more jobs than natives," declared *New York Times* columnist David Brooks on *Meet the Press* in February. "Every additional 100 foreign-born workers in science and technology fields is associated with 262 additional jobs for US natives," he had written in the *Times*, adding that "a quarter of new high-tech companies with more than \$1 million in sales were also founded by the foreign-born."

These claims, cited by Brooks and many others, arise from a body of research that has been the subject of scholarly dispute—though you'd never know it from the media coverage of this issue. The overwhelming majority of coverage presents the conclusions reached in studies like the one conducted by Duke University's Vivek Wadhwa, who publishes widely in popular media and speaks frequently on immigration issues. About a quarter of the 2,054 engineering and technology companies that responded to Wadhwa's telephone survey said they had a "key founder"—defined as a chief technology officer or a CEO—who was foreign-born. Extrapolating from that figure, the study credits immigrant-founded companies with employing 450,000 people nationally in 2005.

But a nationwide survey by political scientist David Hart and economist Zoltan Acs of George Mason University reached a different conclusion. In a 2011 piece in *Economic Development Quarterly*, Hart and Acs note that between 40 and 75 percent of new jobs are created by no more than 10 percent of new businesses—the so-called high-impact firms that have rapidly expanding sales and employment. In their survey of high-impact technology firms, only 16 percent had at least one foreign-born founder, and immigrants constituted about 13 percent of total founders—a figure close to the immigrant share of the general

population. But the more fundamental problem with Wadhwa's study, Hart and Acs suggest, is that it does not report the total number of founders at a given com-

abstractions about the inherent value of science and research and innovation, suggesting they are a panacea for America's economic ills.

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**'When the companies say that they can't hire anyone, they mean that they can't hire anyone at the wages they want to pay,' says Jennifer Hunt, a labor economist at Rutgers University.**

pany, making conclusions about immigrants' overall contribution impossible to quantify.

Evaluating the issues of statistics and sample selection that divide the academic researchers is beyond the purview of most general media, but informing readers that reputable researchers reached different conclusions is not. Though real, the immigrant role in high-tech entrepreneurship could be considerably less dramatic than many writers claim. Research on Silicon Valley entrepreneurs in 1999 by AnnaLee Saxenian, for example, found that 36 percent of high-tech companies owned by Chinese immigrants were doing nothing more groundbreaking than putting together computers for sale from components.

AS ERIN NEILL, OF SENATOR MIKULSKI'S staff, pointed out, no one in the immigration debate speaks effectively for US-born STEM workers. The IT world's libertarian ethos, the relative poverty among young scientists and their unemployed and underemployed peers, and a fear of antagonizing present or potential employers all hamper efforts to organize these workers. National scientific associations and advocacy groups sponsored by industry and universities, meanwhile, represent the interests of those who benefit from the system—tenured faculty, university administrators, and company executives, including those at companies whose donations support scholarly conferences and other association activities. These organizations and their lobbyists frame their policy arguments with feel-good

Which brings us to the story of Xianmin Shane Zhang, a software engineer in Minnesota. According to his LinkedIn page, Zhang earned his BS in engineering in his native China, one MS in physics at Southern Illinois University, and another in computer science at the University of Houston. His profile next lists a series of IT jobs at US companies. In 2005, 43-year-old Zhang was one of a group of workers over 40 who sued their former employer, Best Buy, for age discrimination, when the company laid them off after outsourcing their jobs. The suit ended in an undisclosed settlement.

After being laid off by Best Buy, Zhang eventually fulfilled the rosy forecast of those advocating increased STEM-worker immigration by becoming an entrepreneur, though hardly following the innovation and jobs-for-Americans script. His Z&Z Information Services in St. Paul helps US companies outsource their IT and programming needs to China. "Giving green cards to foreign students can lead to offshoring as well," notes Norman Matloff, who uncovered this tale. That's because young scientists and engineers from abroad get older, and wind up facing the same age discrimination and glutted market as their native-born colleagues. Why isn't that reported, too? **CJR**

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BERYL LIEFF BENDERLY, a fellow at the American Association for the Advancement of Science, writes the "Taken for Granted" column on science-labor-force issues on the website of *Science* magazine. She is the daughter of two immigrants, including a scientist whose patents formed the basis for a company that employed dozens of people.

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Visit Free Future, the ACLU blog for news, commentary, and analysis at the intersection of technology and privacy.



# The natural

Red Smith made it look easy, even when it wasn't

BY TERENCE SMITH

"GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY PLINTH," my father, Red Smith, and his pal, Joe Palmer, the racing columnist, would pray, one with a scotch and soda in hand, the other with bourbon and branch water, as they convened in Palmer's book-lined study at the end of a day. It was their private joke—a plinth is the base of a column—but the prayer was fervent. My father's search for his plinth was unending.

Walter Wellesley (Red) Smith was born in Green Bay, WI, on September 25, 1905. He decided early on that he wanted to go to Notre Dame and become a newspaperman, just the way an older kid he admired had done, so he did. Simple as that. New York was always his goal, but his route was round-about: *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, *The St. Louis Star*, *The Philadelphia Record*, and, finally, the big time: the *New York Herald Tribune* and *The New York Times*. Along the way, he must have written thousands of sports columns, becoming arguably the best in the business, right up until his death in 1982. Now a new collection, *American Pastimes: The Very Best of Red Smith*, is being published by Library of America.

In my memory, Pop was always writing a column, in a press box at the ballpark or racetrack, in his basement office at home, in a plane or train, or in the family car on summer vacation trips to Wisconsin. He would balance

demurred repeatedly when people urged him to write a full-length book about sports or anything else. "I'd rather go to the dentist," he'd say.

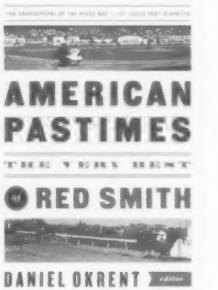
Later in life, the suggestion of a biography or, worse yet, an autobiography, was dismissed out of hand. "To be written about is to be written off," he told me more than once. That's not true, of course, but it revealed his lifelong anxiety about being passed over or forgotten.

Even when he had become the most widely read sports columnist in the country and collected his share of awards, he worried aloud, at least to me, about whether his contract would be renewed, whether the paper would want someone else, someone younger and fresher, to take his place. He always described himself as "a working stiff." That was one reason he always took the side of baseball players in their salary and contract disputes with owners. He saw himself as a performer, never an owner.

The column was his contract with life. As long as he was writing it, he felt he was in the center of things, that he still mattered. That's why he kept at it until the week he died. As long as he was writing, he was part of the world he had lived and loved. Newspapermen were not just his colleagues, they were the best of his friends, the people he chose to spend time with, on and off the beat.

The annual sports calendar provided his material and often established our family's rituals: spring training in Florida, the Kentucky Derby on the first Saturday in May, then the Preakness in Baltimore, the Belmont in New York, Saratoga in August, baseball through the summer, the World Series and college football in the fall, heavyweight championship fights, and, every four years, the Olympic Games. It made for an intoxicating mix.

Curiously, for all the pleasure he took in it, he was an accidental sportswriter. As he told the story, he was a junior man on the news copy desk at *The St. Louis Star*, just a few years into his career, making about \$40 a week, when the editor, the redoubtable Frank Taylor, discovered that half his six-man sports staff was on the take from a local fight promoter and fired them. Looking around for a replacement, he called my father over and supposedly the following conversation ensued:



**American Pastimes:  
The Very Best of Red Smith**  
Edited by Daniel Okrent  
Library of America  
480 pages  
Hardcover \$29.95

his Olivetti portable on his knees in the passenger seat, typing as my mother drove, shushing my sister, Kit, and me in the back seat. Once, when we moved into our house in Connecticut, he had the movers set up a table and chair beneath a tree and wrote a column there. It was moving day, but his deadline was looming, as always.

The columns, including those so ably collected in *American Pastimes*, were his métier, although he would have sneered at that word. The form suited him. He was good at capturing an event or a thought or a story in 800 words or so, often with an elegant phrase or a snatch of dialogue or the perfect anecdote. He

TAYLOR: Do you know anything about sports, Smith?

SMITH: Just what the average fan knows, sir.

TAYLOR: They tell me you're very good on football.

SMITH: Well, if you say so.

TAYLOR: Are you honest?

SMITH: I hope so, sir.

TAYLOR: What if a fight promoter offered you \$10, would you take it?

SMITH: (long pause): \$10 is a lot of money, sir.

TAYLOR: Report to the sports editor Monday.

Once he got into it, he relished writing sports and thought it was as good a vehicle as any to shed some light on the human condition. "I never felt any prodding need to solve the problems of the world," he said in an interview years later. "I feel that keeping the public informed in any area is a perfectly worthwhile way to spend your life. Sports constitute a valid part of our culture, our civilization, and keeping the public informed, and, if possible, a little entertained about sports is not an entirely useless thing."

But during World War II, when he was the father of two and 4-F because of his eyesight and covering "games children play" for *The Philadelphia Record* while others were at the front, he admitted to a "desperate feeling of being useless."

"I was traveling with the last-place Philadelphia Athletics," he recalled, "and more than once, I thought, 'What the hell am I doing here?'" He comforted himself with the published report that FDR thought sports were important for morale. Readers, he said, could read the war news first and then turn to sports to get updated on what he described as "matters of major inconsequence."

Pop roamed off the sports beat occasionally, covering the national political conventions in 1956 and 1968, but when invited to expand his column to politics and world affairs, as James "Scotty" Reston and others had done before him, he declined. Same answer when he was asked to become the sports editor of the *New York Herald Tribune*. No, he said, the column was his thing, the thing he did best. He'd stick with it. I think he would have been a good editor, maybe

even exceptionally good, but he was not drawn to management and titles never interested him.

He defined himself as a newspaperman, not a sportswriter or columnist. "I'd like to be remembered as a good reporter," he said in more than one interview, and he meant it. The much-advertised romance of journalism was real to him, as real in his seventies as it was when he left Green Bay, WI, for his string of newspaper jobs. Until he reached *The New York Times*, already at normal retirement age, he had always worked for the second newspaper in a city. "I killed 'em all," he'd say with a smile.

He was often described as modest and unassuming, and he did adopt an aw-shucks diffidence in the face of prizes and praise. It wasn't exactly an act; he thought he was lucky to have had the chance to do all that he did. But he worked devilishly hard, took his writing, if not himself, seriously, constantly sought to be better, and bathed in the admiration he received, especially from colleagues. As Daniel Okrent notes in the introduction to *American Pastimes*, he was stung when Arthur Daley won the Pulitzer before he did, and he often dismissed the prize privately as a sop given by the journalistic old-boy network to its favorites on the establishment papers.

Until he won his own Pulitzer, that is, on May 3, 1976, at age 70.

I was the *New York Times* correspondent in Israel at the time. When I reached him on the phone in the midst of a newsroom celebration, champagne corks popping in the background, I deadpanned: "You'll refuse it, of course." He lowered his voice and growled into the mouthpiece: "Not on your life!" We both laughed our heads off. I was enormously pleased, and so was he.

Pop enjoyed great good health for all but the last few of his 76 years. Again, he was lucky, given all the late nights, booze, and decades of unfiltered Camels. His idea of a good time was to sit late at Toots Shor's saloon, trading stories with the parade of writers, ballplayers, fighters, mobsters, politicians, and hacks that would come by his table during the



And they're off! Red Smith at Aqueduct in 1960.

course of a night. He was successful financially, but his real definition of economic wellbeing was to have enough money to be able to grab the check for the table at Shor's on occasion and not break the bank in the process.

He loved his life, had two kids and two good marriages, and lived long enough to know his six grandchildren and two of his great-grandchildren and to take my son, Chris, fishing for the first time in his life. They laughed together and Chris caught a fish. That sunny day on Martha's Vineyard became grist for a column, of course, his plinth for the day.

When his health was failing near the end, he struggled to overcome the congestive heart failure and kidney disease that would take his life. He wanted to get better, he said; the Super Bowl was coming up and he wanted to cover it, to write another column, a good column, and then another after that, and make that one better. Spring training was not that far away.

But if he didn't get better, he told me, he had no complaints.

"I've had a great run," he said.

And he did. **CJR**

TERENCE SMITH has been a correspondent, editor and broadcaster for *The New York Times*, *CBS News*, and *PBS* over the course of a four-decade career. This essay is adapted from the afterword to *American Pastimes: The Very Best of Red Smith*.



**Wise words** From left, Raquel Cepeda, Jeff Yang, Gene Policinski, and Richard Prince fielded questions from moderator Farai Chideya.

CJR EVENT

## 'Minority' rules

In case you missed it: a recap of our Newseum panel on race, class, and social mobility

FOR OUR MARCH-APRIL ISSUE, CJR asked 18 journalists to answer a question: "How can we improve coverage of race, class, and social mobility?" On April 3, with support from the American Civil Liberties Union, we convened a panel discussion at the Newseum in Washington, DC, to explore the challenges and implications of reporting on these three topics—"core issues that deal with the heart of American opportunity and democracy," according to ACLU executive director Anthony Romero.

"This is not anything we're going to puzzle through easily," said moderator Farai Chideya, author of *The Color of*

*Our Future* and a Distinguished Writer in Residence at New York University's Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute. "We got here after many years of struggling with American identity, race, and class. And we're going to keep pushing." What follows are highlights from that discussion, and points where CJR's panelists pushed particularly hard. To watch the full panel, go to [www.cspanvideo.org/program/311883-1](http://www.cspanvideo.org/program/311883-1)

### 'Majority minority' nations and newsrooms

"Somewhere between 2043 and 2050...we will have a 'majority

minority' society, in which no single racial group is more than 50 percent" of the overall population, said Gene Policinski, executive director of the Freedom Forum's First Amendment Center. "We're moving toward a diverse society in a way this country has never seen."

But newsrooms may not share the same trajectory. A study released in 2012 by the American Society of Newspaper Editors found that, while print and online newsroom employment fell by 2.4 percent last year, job loss for minorities in newsrooms was 5.7 percent.

One such "minority majority" city is Philadelphia, where the combined black and Hispanic populations are greater than the white population, and where roughly one in four people is below the poverty level. In February, *Philadelphia Magazine* published "Being White in Philly," a plaintive feature that generated more than 6,000 comments, many of them angry, and heated discussion among our panelists.

"It raised some of the issues we're talking about, including the fact that



**Question time** Thanks for your comments! At top right, CJR's Stephanie Sandberg and Cyndi Stivers flank the ACLU's Anthony Romero.

the media in Philadelphia, in particular print media, were not very diverse," said Richard Prince, a columnist at the Maynard Institute for Journalism Education. "*Philadelphia Magazine* itself had no African-Americans on its editorial staff."

While its demographics may not precisely reflect those of its city, a media organization should seek out the expertise necessary to cover a diverse community. "There's education going on every time somebody with a different perspective is in your newsroom," said Policinski.

### The pitfalls of political language

The day before CJR's panel, the Associated Press announced that its stylebook would no longer recommend use of "illegal immigrant"—a term previously applied to a person rather than to a person's behavior. "Every time I see the term 'illegal immigrant,' I think to myself, 'I'm sure Native Americans have a very different perspective on what 'illegal immigrant' means,'" said Jeff Yang, "Tao Jones" columnist for *The Wall Street Journal* online.

"Language is political," said Prince. "We see the same thing going on with 'pro-life' versus 'pro-choice,' 'affirmative action' versus 'racial preferences,' 'same-sex marriage' versus 'gay marriage.' For the Associated Press to decide that being 'illegal' is not the first thing you should know about someone...is an achievement."

### Making a business case for diversifying newsrooms

Raquel Cepeda, a documentary filmmaker and author of *Bird of Paradise: How I Became Latina*, said she was "often the only person of color" on documentary-film panels and noted that she'd struggled to place sections of her book in mainstream media outlets. Chideya recalled letting an African-American college grad stay with her for six months so she could afford to take an unpaid internship.

"That was my way of giving back to my own community—and I don't mean the black community, I mean the journalism community," said Chideya.

"Because the journalism community deserves diversity."

As media organizations report on an increasingly mixed populace, Policinski suggested, those diverse communities might just help those newsrooms survive. "There's an economic argument to be made here, I think," he said.

At the same time, journalists of color shouldn't be expected to cover only their own communities, or to speak on behalf of everyone of their race (and yes, both of these things happen too often). "Because you're from a certain race, you're expected to be an expert on that race," Yang said wryly, to the agreement of the other panelists.

"I don't think that we can survive as an industry if we try to say that the only way people can cover a story is if they have a certain background from which to speak," Yang concluded. "That's antithetical to what journalism is about. Journalism is about telling stories that matter to a broad array of people, not purely to one-to-one, customized perspectives." **CJR**



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Announces the Winner of the  
2013 GOLDSMITH PRIZE  
FOR INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

**Patricia Callahan, Sam Roe, Michael Hawthorne**

*Chicago Tribune*

"Playing with Fire"

The *Chicago Tribune*'s investigative series revealed how a deceptive campaign by the chemical and tobacco industries brought toxic flame retardants into people's homes and bodies, despite the fact that the dangerous chemicals don't work as promised. As a result of the investigation, the U.S. Senate revived toxic chemical reform legislation and California moved to revamp the rules responsible for the presence of dangerous chemicals in furniture sold nationwide.

## FINALISTS

**Alan Judd, Heather Vogell, John Perry, M.B. Pell**

*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*  
"Cheating Our Children"

The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*'s series on irregularities in standardized testing revealed that pressure for ever-higher scores led to apparent cheating by teachers and school administrators across the nation. The reporting, based on analysis of tens of thousands of test results, initiated a national conversation about the long-term effects of the accountability provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act.

**Collaboration by the Center for Public Integrity, Global Integrity and Public Radio International, with additional cooperation from members of the Investigative News Network**

"State Integrity Investigation"

The State Integrity Investigation created a tool that is being used by news organizations all over the nation to hold government accountable. The collaboration was a data-driven analysis of every state's laws and practices that deter corruption and promote accountability and openness, thus providing local news organizations a means of investigating what is happening in their state. The results include accelerated reform in government and an increase in disclosure requirements in many states.

**Jason Felch, Kim Christensen and members of the *Los Angeles Times* staff**

*Los Angeles Times*  
"The Shame of the Boy Scouts"

The *Los Angeles Times* made public thousands of files documenting sexual abuse of Boy Scouts by their troop leaders, resulting in reforms that will help ensure the protection of children. The Boy Scouts of America has launched a comprehensive review of the files, with a promise to report to law enforcement any cases not previously disclosed. The Scouts also apologized to victims of abuse and offered to pay for their counseling.

**Charles Duhigg, Keith Bradsher, David Barboza, David Segal and David Kocieniewski**

*The New York Times*  
"The iEconomy"

This series revealed the harsh conditions under which Chinese workers assembling iPhones and iPads live and work; the low pay and high turnover at Apple's retail stores; and the lengths to which Apple went to reduce its tax bill. As a result of the investigation, Chinese working conditions and salaries have improved, Apple has announced it will invest money in U.S.-based manufacturing and Congress opened an investigation into technology company tactics to reduce taxes.

**David Barstow**

*The New York Times*  
"Wal-Mart Abroad"

David Barstow demonstrated that Wal-Mart's conquest of Mexico was built on a foundation of corruption and revealed how top executives feared exposure and made attempts to keep their practices in the dark. As a result of this series, the Justice Department and the SEC are investigating for violations of the federal anti-bribery law. Wal-Mart has also overhauled its compliance and investigation protocols.

## GOLDSMITH BOOK PRIZE WINNERS

### ACADEMIC:

**Jonathan M. Ladd**  
*Why Americans Hate the Media and How It Matters*

### TRADE:

**Rebecca MacKinnon**  
*Consent of the Networked: The Worldwide Struggle for Internet Freedom*

## GOLDSMITH CAREER AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM

**Nicholas D. Kristof**,  
Columnist, *The New York Times*

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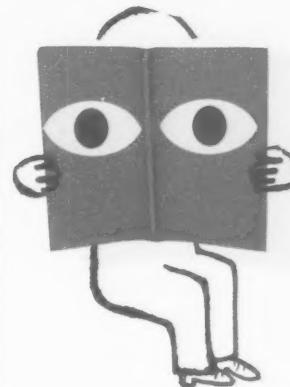
**Fighting for the Press:  
The Inside Story of the  
Pentagon Papers and  
Other Battles**

By James C. Goodale  
CUNY Journalism Press  
260 pages  
Paperback \$20

IN THE SPRING OF 1971, James C. Goodale was a 37-year-old lawyer who had risen fast to become vice president and general counsel of The New York Times Company, dealing most often with corporate matters. But he was handed the century's biggest First Amendment case when the *Times* received the batch of classified documents about the Vietnam War that came to be known as the Pentagon Papers.

Four decades later, Goodale is at last ready to recount the struggle, inside the newspaper and in the federal courts, that led to publication of the papers, legal combat with the angry and befuddled Nixon administration, and ultimately a Supreme Court ruling that firmly rejected prior restraint. Goodale was there for all the grueling parts—recruiting counsel after the newspaper's old firm, Lord Day & Lord, bowed out; pulling late-nighters to meet tight court deadlines; tracking court proceedings, some held in utter secrecy; and propping up corporate waverers at the *Times*.

He is justified in claiming credit. In the 1980 book



*Without Fear or Favor*, a history of the *Times* built around the Pentagon Papers case, Harrison E. Salisbury credited Goodale with “most clearly perceiving the implications”—and importance—of the decision to publish. Since he left the *Times* in 1980, Goodale has continued to fight for the rights of the press, most notably journalists’ never-ending effort to protect sources. He now casts a critical eye on what he regards as threatening actions of the Obama administration, which he appears to regard as Nixonism without the nastiness. (This book marks the welcome debut of the CUNY Journalism Press, an imprint of the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism of The City University of New York.)

**America 1933: The Great Depression, Lorena Hickok, Eleanor Roosevelt, and the Shaping of the New Deal**  
By Michael Golay  
Free Press  
336 pages. \$26.99

**THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME**  
attention has been paid

to pioneering female journalist Lorena Hickok. Ever since her personal papers were unsealed in 1978, she has had the attention of historians, many of them interested in deciphering her close relationship with Eleanor Roosevelt,

whom she first met while covering FDR’s 1928 gubernatorial campaign for The Associated Press. She later quit the AP and became one of a group of reporters who were sent out by Harry Hopkins, head of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, to assess the condition of a nation at the nadir of the Great Depression. Her letters were initially collected in an anthology by Richard Lowitt and Maurine Beasley, *One-Third of a Nation* (1981).

Now Michael Golay has created an enriched version of Hickok’s odyssey. Drawing on many other contemporary sources, especially local newspapers, Golay recounts how, in August 1933, Hickok, fortyish, overweight, diabetic, and a bad driver, set out to see the worst of the Depression. And it was bad—families with no income or resources, paralyzed cities, millions unemployed, children slowly starving; so bad, in fact, that recovery seemed impossible. By the next summer, she had gone from coast to coast and

north to south, faithfully writing almost daily to Hopkins and to Eleanor Roosevelt. Miraculously, she began to see signs that the emergency employment measures were starting to work and that the country might, after all, survive.

I was interested to see that, in a curious way, I crossed paths with her. She paused in my hometown, Charles City, IA, just before Thanksgiving 1933. The town’s big tractor plant was all but closed, throwing hundreds out of work. I remember the smell of a soup kitchen operating in the halls of my grade school. Although wary of bedbugs, Hickok stayed at the downtown Hildreth Hotel (which burned down the next year) and filed her reports. The first paychecks from the emergency jobs programs were just arriving, and she produced a quote from a Charles City woman that has turned up in history books ever since: “The first thing I did was go out and buy a dozen oranges. I hadn’t tasted any for so long I had forgotten what they were like.” Golay’s section on my hometown sounds perfectly accurate—but what do I know? I was five years old. **CJR**

JAMES BOYLAN is the founding editor of the Columbia Journalism Review and professor emeritus of journalism and history at the University of Massachusetts—Amherst.



#### EXIT INTERVIEW

## FCC ya later!

**JULIUS GENACHOWSKI'S FOUR YEARS AS CHAIRMAN OF THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION** had a little something for everyone. There was rapid expansion of broadband access, both wired and wireless, but his net-neutrality rules were blasted by open-Internet advocates as feckless (and Verizon is suing to overturn them). He blocked the AT&T-T-Mobile merger, but allowed the Comcast-NBC deal to go through. He pushed to relax the longstanding ban on companies owning a newspaper and a TV outlet in the same market (a decision is pending), then forced local TV stations to put their political-ad data online. Genachowski—a former CJR intern during his undergrad days at Columbia College—announced in March that he was leaving the FCC, but by mid-April hadn't said when. CJR's **Michael Meyer** spoke to Genachowski in April, just days before he announced that, when he does leave, he's headed to the Aspen Institute as a senior fellow to advise on communications policy.

**An important part of your tenure was the 2011 Information Needs of Communities Report. What was the genesis of that?** Promoting a vibrant ecosystem for news and information has historically been an area of interest for the FCC. I believed we needed to look at those issues with the same spirit that we looked at the larger economic and social issues affected by broadband: a comprehensive, dispassionate, future-oriented look at the opportunities and challenges that information technologies were presenting for news and information. One of the suggestions in the report is that the FCC look carefully at moderate reforms focused on promoting local news and accountability journalism. That's something that's gotten vigorous discussion at the agency, and I'm certain will continue to be an area of focus.

**Does the FCC have enough power to act on the report's recommendations?** It does, but I think it's more important to ask questions and develop answers to those questions first, before we act. If we get the questions right, and we get the answers right,

'The government [should] put more information online, so journalists can access it easily.'

the authority will take care of itself. The commission has broad authority under the communications act. It seems to me that our work and thinking and engagement should be around: 'How do we set and meet important goals in the new world? What are the best ideas?' That was really the idea behind the Information Needs report.

**What else should the agency continue to focus on from a journalistic perspective?** Well, one of the recommendations of the Information Needs report was that the government put more information online so journalists can access it easily. Second, the ability of journalists to put information on the Internet and be assured that it will reach an audience is very important. We adopted the first enforceable rule to preserve Internet freedom. Continuing to push forward on promoting universal broadband adoption is also important. It's important both for the American people—we need to make sure that the public has access to all that news and information—and also from a business-model perspective, because the larger the market is for Internet-based journalism, the more it's possible to develop business models that can support this kind of journalism.

**Tell us about your days as a CJR intern.** I remember that it was at the time when personal computers were just hitting college campuses, and I was the first person in my dorm who had a Mac. One of the things I was doing at the time was re-establishing Columbia's oldest newspaper, *Acta Columbiana*. I was able to do the layout using this new Mac and produce it on a printer. I remember talking about that with the people I worked with at CJR. We all wondered, 'Is this going to change the world of newspapers?' CJR

# THE NEW YORK TIMES WINS FOUR 2013 PULITZER PRIZES



David Barboza

## FOR INTERNATIONAL REPORTING

David Barboza was honored for "China's Secret Fortunes," articles that examined the financial interests of the families of high-ranking Chinese officials. At considerable personal risk, Mr. Barboza, a veteran Shanghai correspondent, collected thousands of pages of documents, and showed, among other things, that relatives of Prime Minister Wen Jiabao had accumulated a secret fortune of \$2.7 billion through businesses closely entwined with the state. Untangling these financial holdings provided an unusually detailed look at how politically connected people profit as state influence and private wealth converge in China's fast-growing economy.

To see the series, go to [nytimes.com/chinas-secret-fortunes](http://nytimes.com/chinas-secret-fortunes)



David Barstow



Alejandra Xanic von Bertrab

## FOR INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

In "Wal-Mart Abroad," David Barstow and Alejandra Xanic von Bertrab showed how the company's growth in Mexico was fueled by bribes that allowed Wal-Mart to skirt Mexican laws. Confronted with evidence of widespread corruption, Wal-Mart, now the largest private employer in Mexico, focused more on damage control than on rooting out wrongdoing. The series led to investigations by the Justice Department, the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Mexican authorities.

To see the series, go to [nytimes.com/walmaratabroad](http://nytimes.com/walmaratabroad)



John Branch

## FOR FEATURE WRITING

John Branch's "Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek" told a story that was fascinating journalism and, in its online presentation, an innovative and immersive experience. The 14-page article, published as a special section, vividly captured the world and hazards of backcountry skiing. It portrayed 16 world-class skiers and snowboarders who set out to ski Tunnel Creek, an unmonitored play area of reliably deep snow in the Washington Cascades. When a slab of snow cracked and swept violently down the mountain, the result was tragic.

To view this multimedia feature, go to [nytimes.com/snow-fall](http://nytimes.com/snow-fall)



Charles Duhigg



Keith Bradsher



David Barboza



David Kocieniewski



Steve Lohr



John Markoff



David Segal



David Streitfeld



Hiroko Tabuchi



Bill Vlasic

## FOR EXPLANATORY REPORTING

It took the persistence of 10 New York Times business reporters — Charles Duhigg, Keith Bradsher, David Barboza, David Kocieniewski, Steve Lohr, John Markoff, David Segal, David Streitfeld, Hiroko Tabuchi and Bill Vlasic — to shed light on why fast-growing high-tech industries create so few jobs in the United States. "The iEconomy" also disclosed the harsh conditions under which some Chinese workers assembling devices for Apple and other American companies live and work, and examined the conventional wisdom that these jobs can't return to the United States. The series revealed the extraordinary lengths to which technology companies go to reduce their tax bills and exploit the patent system. Among the results: working conditions at Chinese factories were significantly improved, and readers better understood the hidden world behind the elegantly designed devices so many use every day.

To see the series, go to [nytimes.com/ieconomy](http://nytimes.com/ieconomy)

The New York Times and members of its staff have now won 112 Pulitzer Prizes, far more than any other newspaper.

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